International Tourism Conference Dubrovnik, 2019

# "TOURISM IN THE VUCA WORLD: TOWARDS THE ERA OF (IR)RESPONSIBILITY"

## Proceedings book

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Publisher: Institute for tourism

Zagreb, 2020

International Tourism Conference Dubrovnik, 2019

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## Impressum

Editors: Izidora Marković Vukadin and Damir Krešić

Publisher: Institute for Tourism, Zagreb, Croatia

For the publisher: Damir Krešić

Conference sponsors:

Ministry of Tourism REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA Ministry of Science and Education

University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics & Business

Tecnhical editors: Lidija Nujić and Sara Melkić

Lector: Diana Baus

ISBN: 378-953-6145-45-4

Zagreb 2020.

## Preface

It is our pleasure to present the Proceedings of the International Tourism Conference Dubrovnik, which was organized by the Institute for Tourism, from the 6th to 9th, November 2019, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Institute for Tourism. The main goal of the Conference was to bring academics and tourism industry researchers together in order to discuss, exchange and share latest research and ideas and to bridge the ever-widening gap between tourism theory and practice, especially evident in the modern world of constant changes.

Since the aim of ITCD conference was to disseminate state-of-the-art research regarding the main topic of the Conference: TOURISM IN THE VUCA WORLD: TOWARDS THE ERA OF (IR)RESPONSIBILITY, papers presented in these Proceedings emphasize tourism as a historically-recognized volatile industry, still with many issues to address in order to move toward more sustainable future. Therefore, papers presented on the ITC conference cover a variety of topics, which is evident from the diversity of twenty-one paper included in these Proceeding. Papers are divided in four sections: Transformation of tourism management, products, and practices, Challenges of destination transformation and overtourism conflicts, Community roles and attitudes in VUCA world, and The new age of enhanced visitor involvement and experience.

The first section, Transformation of tourism management, products, and practices consists of papers focused on a wide variety of phenomena induced by modern trends in tourism industry. This includes transformation of existing practices in destination management and marketing organizations, tour operators, development of new special interest tourism products, and new and innovative resource management. Overtourism, as a recent phenomenon in various types of destinations and the new term in discourse, is recognized as a main topic of the second section of the Proceedings. Furthermore, conflicts arising from overtourism affect destinations in a way that they have to transform and adopt to preserve their landscape (both urban and rural), identity, and social cohesion and heritage (cultural and natural). For destinations to succeed in that mission, it is essential to recognize community attitudes and based on that provide the involved stakeholders with an appropriate role in tourism management, which is covered in the third section of the Proceedings. Recognizing attitudes and involvement of stakeholders is a quite complex process where mutual impact occurs often triggered by a large number of different individuals, who are elements of community and different types of tourism products causing different effects. Finally, the fourth section of the Proceedings, The new age of enhanced visitor involvement and experience, is focused on roles and potential of different tourists/visitors in various types of destinations. The question of tourist choices, perception, and satisfaction is utterly described in selected papers, followed by special segments of tourism demand as a potential for rethinking current tourism development in some destinations.

We hope that the papers included in these Proceedings will catch your attention and direct your further research and reflections toward more responsible and sustainable future of tourism.

Editors
Izidora Marković Vukadin and Damir Krešić

## Content

# TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT, PRODUCTS AND PRACTICES

# DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DESTINATION MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF ESTONIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have a vital role in sustainable development. In recent years, tourism developers have faced the problem of the future of DMOs in the new global economy. The aim of the paper is to make suggestions to Estonian DMOs on planning development and action patterns. The research question was to find out what the development opportunities for the Estonian DMOs. Data were collected with a qualitative study from Estonian DMOs, Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO), Estonian Tourist Board (ETB) and the local governments.*

*The study revealed that the role of RTOs in the Estonian tourism model is not clear. There is a need for leadership and tourism sector competence on DMOs management level. In marketing, there is still "fair-oriented" approach and digital media is less noticeable. DMOs must focus their activities and financial support should be based on the measurable effect of tourism impact.*

*The co-partners of ETB should be strong destinations, culture, and nature areas. It is advisable to involve experts and tourism entrepreneurs. There is a need to create a measurement system that takes into consideration the effectiveness of DMOs and the effects of the tourist economy. DMOs should deal more with digital and content marketing, with the local value-based product development, quality, and feedback coordination. Forming tourism departments in the local government structures or entrepreneur-based tourism clusters is a financial model that needs to be considered.*

***Keywords:*** *business-models, leadership, tourism ecosystem, engagement, strategic planning*

## Introduction

Destination management organizations (DMOs) are called the main „pillars" of the tourism industry as they manage, develop and market the destination. With reference to economic and political decisions, governments are establishing economy measures to decrease the costs of the public sector. (Pike & Ives, 2017; Pike, 2016; Borzyszkowski, 2015).

As DMO is related to several different stakeholders, it is assumed that smaller financial and human resources enable them to achieve better results, and the DMO'sinitiated impact on the destination development is bigger and the use of resources is more efficient. The benefit provided by DMOs, the efficiency of activities and their assessment are becoming more topical (Pike, 2016; Henderson, 2016; Mason, 2008).

Proceeding from that, it is important to find out the needs of the destination and tourism stakeholders and identify the activity and funding models of DMOs, and development trends.

## Theoretical background

DMO as the leading organizational unit creates a common understanding, vision and future perspectives of the destination facilitating the partnership of the tourism sector and their mutual collaboration (UNWTO, 2016). DMO has an important role in explaining the aims and results of developing and marketing a tourist destination to the public (Negrusa & Coros, 2016; Pechlaner et al., 2014).

Elbe and Emmoth (2014) name local enterprises and community, public sector, active groupings, NGOs, and tourists as the most important stakeholders for the DMO of the destination. Depending on the needs of the state, regional and local level, and the standards of the administrative capacity of the public sector, the functions of the DMO may vary but in brief, they are as follows (Pearce, 2015; Gajdošíková, Gajdošíka, Kućerová, & Magátováb, 2016; Pike, 2016; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014; UNWTO, 2016; Varghese 2013):

- implementation of tourism policy;
- branding the destination, positioning and marketing;
- strategic planning, evaluating the current situation;
- coordinating the development of tourism products/attractions, organizing events;
- managing information, communication, resources and visitor flows / journey
- risk analysis and crisis management;
- raising awareness and training tourism specialists and tourism enterprises;
- initiating partnership and collaboration;
- quality control and management, arranging the feedback system;
- observing trends, predicting future scenarios.

DMOs may be mono-functional specializing only in one activity, or multi-functional performing several activities listed above simultaneously. It depends on the size of the tourism area, awareness, financial resources and the leaders competencies whether there is the need for primary activities (infrastructure, accessibility, attractions, etc), whether it is the intermediate level and functional competencies are needed (product development, marketing, etc), or the advanced level has been achieved coordinating the collaboration between functions (e.g quality system, initiating collaboration, creating future scenarios). (Pearce, 2015; Pike, 2016; Jørgensen, 2017)

The management structures of destinations differ across countries. Usually, they are the models of public and private sector partnerships (UNWTO, 2016). Negrusa and Coros (2016) add that DMOs are often partly or completely state-funded and may belong to the structure of the public sector. Provan and Kenis (ref. Beaumont & Dredge, 2010) distinguish three management structures in destination management:

DMO as a leading organization, central coordinating role in all functions, centralized power held by the board and council, top-down decision-making process;

DMO as a network managed by its members, the activities necessary to achieve the goals are done by themselves, decentralized, consensual, less formal, dependent on members' time and human resource;

DMO as an administrative unit, hired by the destination network to accomplish its goals and activities, have expert competencies, acts as a communication and coordination center, does not decide or manage, accountable to the network.

To assure sustainability and correspond to trends and changes such as limitation of the resources, sharing economy, technology and social media importance, new customers with different needs, new destinations, lifestyle business, safety and security issues, revenue management, co-creation, etc., the DMOs need to diversify their business and funding models. However, each new approach needs a well-considered strategy that mitigated the risk of losing existing financial sources. Many DMOs depend on public money, others are financed by models or networks of enterprisers. TID (Tourism Improvement District) is the new destination development model which is the concept of tourist value area or magnet area. (Destination Think!, 2016; Destinations International, 2017; Costa et al., 2016, Skift, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2017) Beritelli, Bieger and Laesser (2014) use the term of SBA (Strategic Business Areas) based on Swiss experience. The term refers to the strategic business areas assembling the entrepreneurs who provide tourists with services and experiences.

TID or SBA concepts identify where and when are the biggest flows of visitors when and why these places are visited and on what is money spent on. The visitors of one SBA are usually the visitor segments with the same travel motives and interests. These areas and attractions are recognizable as strategic business areas. The area is supported by the system of enterprises and organizations which collaborate directly or indirectly to create value for visitors and make an operating profit. Having identified which SBAs have come into being and which are able to develop, the DMOs can provide their support. Changing the destination more heterogeneous, the DMO's traditional communal business model will change as well (Beritelli et al., 2014).

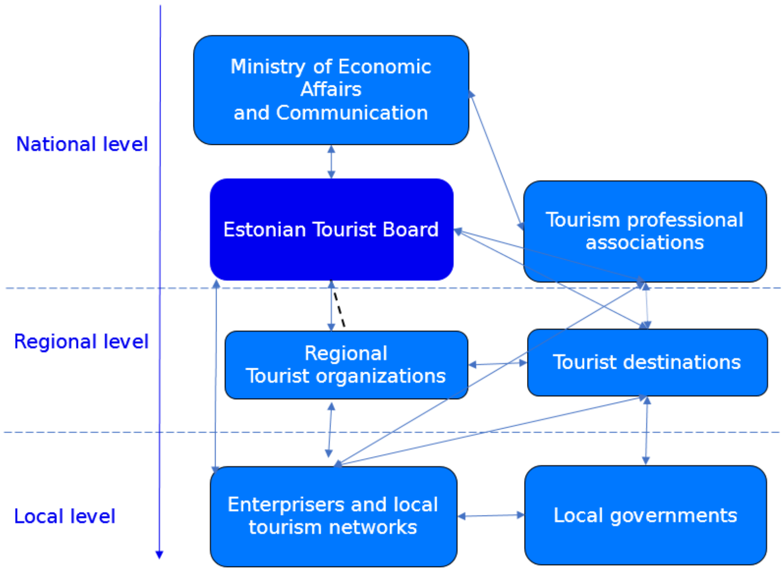
The sample of the practical accomplishment of SBA concept is Switzerland, where during the reform, the destination, as an undivided territorial area, hadgone over to several strategic business areas. This resulted in so-called third generation DMOs, which are not a big institution belonging to common property and serving all parties, but which carry out the tasks with clear aim and measurers agreed on negotiations (Beritelli et al., 2014).

The importance of entrepreneurs in DMO operational models has been underestimated because without innovative, dedicated, and risky entrepreneurs no destination nor DMO succeeds. DMO may not have control over the future of the destination because the real control and resource management are held by public sector which acts according to the guidelines formulated within political decision-making. The tendency of the destination and DMO operating models are moving from a public, cross-sectoral organization to a business-based network structure. If entrepreneurs do not want or are unable to cooperate, the destination or the DMO cannot function effectively. (Komppula, 2014)

### Destination development and organizations in Estonia

In 2017, tourism accounted for 7% of Estonian GDP and export of tourism services accounted for 10% of the country's total exports and 31% of services exports (Mutso, 2018). The Estonian tourism management model includes three levels: local, regional, and national (Figure 1). The aim of the Estonian Tourist Board (ETB) is to increase the visibility of Estonia as a travel destination and the international competitiveness of tourism products. For different activities, ETB receives input from professional associations, cooperative organizations, Regional Tourism Organizations (RTOs) and tourist destinations DMO (Mutso, 2017).

**Figure 1.** Tourism management model in Estonia (Mutso, 2017)




Source: Mutso, 2017

Estonia is divided into three tourism regions, whose activities and co-operation between counties and TDC are coordinated by regional organizations or RTOs. In addition to RTOs, there are numerous geographic location-based tourism development and/or cooperation organizations. In some cases, DMO roles are performed by local government bodies. DMO functions are also provided by county development centers, natural and cultural areas and business-based organizations. (M. Eenmaa, personal communication, 06.11.2017).

### Methods

The research question was to find out what are development opportunities for the Estonian DMOs. To answer to the research question, a qualitative study was conducted.

It was aimed to find out, through the individual interview method, the DMOs' and RTOs' visions of the functions, operating models and role of organizations in the future. The sample was made of 18 representatives of DMOs from Estonian tourist destinations. They are the most important partners and financiers of Estonian DMOs for the activities and operating models of DMOs and RTOs. The criterion for selecting the subjects was geographic variability, ie the variability of the DMOs involved, both in terms of size of destination, political sensitivity, structure, and operational and financing model.

The study included 21 questions that were compiled and categorized based on theoretical approaches and previous studies. Content analysis was used as a data analysis method. Data were coded and categorized using the deductive approach – categories were compiled based on research topics (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Research topics and sources

| Topics/categories | Sources |
|---|---|
| DMO and destination management | Provan and Kenis (ref. Beaumont & Dredge, 2010); Pechlaner *et al.* (2014); Beritelli and Laesser (2014); Sainaghia and Baggio (2017); Elbe and Emmoth (2014) |
| DMO activities, functions, collaboration | Pearce (2015); Pike and Ives (2017); Pike (2016); Volgger and Pechlaner (2014); Gajdošíková *et al.* (2016); UNWTO (2016); Pikkemaat, Mike and Chan (2018); Komppula (2014); Destination Think! (2017) |
| DMO financing | Beritelli and Laesser (2014); Pike and Ives (2017); Cuypers (2017) |
| DMO development opportunities | Pikkemaat, Mike and Chan (2018); Jørgensen (2017); Borzyszkowski (2015); Destinations International (2017) |

Source: Authors' research

**Results**

The DMO and tourist destinations are interlinked and cannot be viewed separately. Additionally, destinations are not bounded to the county or local government (LG) boundaries and must be based on the guest's logic. However, DMOs and RTOs still refer to tourist destinations within the boundaries of the county and LG. As the share of LG funding in the DMO budget is high, most of the DMO activities are currently focused solely on its own county.

The study participants agreed that the competitiveness of the DMO and the destination were directly related. The effectiveness and management of the DMO depends on the network of relationships, human resources, scientific and practical competence, the focus of the destination, the customer segment, etc., but the participants do not think it can be predetermined nationally – the agreement must be reached under the leadership of the DMO, in partnership with the community and entrepreneurs.

A lot of DMOs activities are thought to be duplicated, as there are too many tourism organizations that lead to competition and the issue of which organization and activities are supported by LG. The same problem arises when different DMOs apply for the same actions from the same measures.

Somewhat different is the situation in the region where every county does not have its own DMO. One of the members of the RTO is the local government and Tourist Information Centers (TICs) that are cooperating because they are not linked by DMOs. Some interviewees found that coordinating tourism within a county by one strong organization would exclude duplication of activities, facilitate the distribution of municipal support, and would also make the system clearer for entrepreneurs.

The members of the boards of DMOs are predominantly representatives of LG, and the entrepreneurs are represented on a smaller scale. The governing bodies of the DMOs are often political, formal and, moreover, control bodies without real responsibility. It was a bottleneck that partners from outside the tourism sector were not included in the councils or in the membership. The most highlighted aspects were marketing competencies, conducting major marketing campaigns, lack of skills and capability to purchase marketing services, and the lack of attractiveness of tourism products, feedback, and hospitality.

The roleof the Ministry of Economy and Communication, as the coordinator of tourism policy and TDC,as its implementing entity, is unambiguous. At the same time, the national fragmentation of tourism coordination was pointed out. As a future problem, it was mentioned that if the EU subsidies to the state and the TDC are reduced, then in order to carry out the same activities, the TDC will have to sell its services more and the financial contribution of the destinations may increase. All respondents shared the opinion that it is difficult to propose a single and exclusive vision and a sustainable financing model for Estonian DMOs and RTOs. The dependence of funding and activities on projects was a threat.

According to the respondents, coordinating destinations based on the regional model and defining tourism regions is neither justified nor effective. It is difficult to make a tourism product and a joint offer based on current regions. The islands, major attraction centers (eg Tartu, Pärnu, Tallinn) and their surroundings, ethnic cultural areas (Peipsimaa, Mulgimaa,), UNESCO-related areas (Kihnu, Setomaa) and natural areas (Lahemaa, Soomaa, Matsalu National Parks) are seen as a single destination.

Due to the changing environment, more influential attraction centers and cultural areas have found their identity where the management of the field takes place either through the DMO or the LG structure. As a result, RTOs are "excessive intermediate levels" whose main function is to select and mediate information and to coordinate cooperation. The direction of cooperation with the ETB could be based on smaller areas or networks where the tourist's route overlaps with the destination identity. The role of the regional level is unclear and questionable, because some regional coordination is needed (eg introducing Estonia to foreign markets).

DMO is a partner of the state, through which entrepreneurs could be reached– to find out the expectations and need for involvement. The expectations of local governments for DMO relate not only to marketing but also to DMO initiating new initiatives, including the introduction of new tourism products and investments into the region. DMO is not always reliable for potential investors or partners. Interviewees believe that the tourism department in the LG structure is often easier to initiate projects, market and develop destinations, and communicate with entrepreneurs because there are no intermediates. The decision-making process is faster, the financial resources are the same for the LG, and the purpose and justification of the activities is clearer.

When discussing the roles and functions of the DMOs, it emerged that creating a destination and brand, strategic planning and setting goals, initiating collaboration, product development and quality control, and marketing activities targeted at the internal market should remain at the level of the local DMO. Functions that are not consciously addressed and prioritized are the management and analysis of visitor flows and routes, crises, and risks. Some DMOs are engaged in quality control, feedback gathering and service design, but as a rule, this activity is not systemic. The inadequacy of general tourism statistics and surveys was highlighted as a major bottleneck.

Currently, DMOs are either non-profit organizations (NGOs) or foundations. In the case of NGOs, it was pointed out that members are usually both LGs and entrepreneurs. As a rule, the financial contribution of a LG as a membership contribution or an operating grant is significantly higher than the contribution of the entrepreneur, but each member has one vote equally. The interview participants do not consider the quantity of members important but quality, because the more members, the more difficult it is for an organization to manage and respond to all expectations. Two models were the DMO's sustainable management structure (Table 2): department in the LG structure or cluster.

**Table 2.** DMOs sustainable management models

| Specific department in the LG structure | Network of entrepreneurs (cluster) |
|---|---|
| A model with a clearer budget structure, information exchange, easier agreement of activities, shortening of the decision-making chain and increasing awareness of LG officials.<br><br>The problem: political influence on politicians and competences – the greater the share of the DMO budget in the financing of LG, the more political impact it will have on the DMO. | Entrepreneurs as cluster partners receive services according to their own business package that increases the role of entrepreneurs and the role of businesses in managing the destination.<br><br>The cluster is partnered with LG which, according to long-term agreements, supports the development and marketing of one or two of its own tourist attractions through cluster activities.<br><br>The problem: companies do not always think in the context of the destination as a whole, also, the companies that provide added value to the tourism sector are not included. |

Source: Authors' research

The transition of the DMO to an enterprise-based business model (for example, the SBA model) would enhance development opportunities and focus activities for enterprisers at a different stage of development and at different size of the companies which are interested in faster development themselves and their destination, butare willing to contribute with their time and money. The business cluster is also less influenced by politics - the bottom-up pattern of leadership forces the LGs to work together. The SBA model was a threat to the plurality of different sources of funding which may not be suitable for all parties to focus on.

Looking at the financial model and the revenue base, it became clear that in the case of RTOs, the share of public sector basic financing, the LGs operating grants or membership fees are 85-90% of the total budget. 10-15% of the revenue is generated by the entrepreneurs' income from seminars, training, and other activities.

The DMOs participating in the study have a different management structure, but by generalizing, the share of public funding in the DMO budget is around 80-90% and the private sector contribution is 10-15%. Public sector funding includes Enterprise Government Grants to support information centers, LG or Association of Local Authorities membership grants and operating grants, European Union (EU) or Leader project grants, as well as their own contributions to projects. Only in one DMO, the public and private sector contributed equally to the budget.

The tourist tax, as a source of income, was excluded by a couple of participants. Others were in favor, but they had no clear vision of the collection and division of the process. Increasing a revenue base through NGOs' membership fees was not considered reasonable, as it creates an unequal situation where each member has one vote in the decision-making process, but the proportions of membership fees vary between companies and municipalities.

The study showed that it would be much easier to plan DMO activities if there were multi-annual financing agreements, the budget would be more flexible and DMO would have greater decision-making power over the use of the money. The overall view is that the contribution of the private sector to DMO budgets is still too small and its growth is the basis for a sustainable financing model. There was no increase in the volume of business (sales of goods such as souvenirs or travel services).

**Discussion**

Pearce (2015) and Jørgensen (2017) claim that there is no single and optimal model of functions and activities in the management of the destination. The survey revealed that although the Estonian RTOs have public funding and the role of regional cooperation and product development, the current tourism management model is no longer functioning.

The tourist destination forms a complete value chain, based on the customer journey, which has a unique identity and service providers share common business goals (UNWTO, 2016; Laesser & Beritelli, 2013; Liu et al., 2017). Based on the results of this study, the main co-operation partners of the ETB could be:

- stronger attraction centers with identity;
- smaller attraction areas and natural and cultural regions;
- smaller networks.

Based on Gajdošíková et al. (2016) and on the results of the study, there is no need for a separate DMO at a destination with smaller tourism potential. A tourist information center or a job in the LG structure is sufficient and the existing resources may be directed elsewhere. However, from the point of view of such destinations, RTO's roles such as regional cooperation and information exchange, marketing and product development on foreign markets, production of regional publications and content marketing, initiation and implementation of cross-border marketing and development projects require implementation. This could result in hiring of regional tourist consultants . In addition, it is important that the DMOs are concentrated into one of the regional tourism organizations in the region, on either jobs or branch offices in smaller destinations and thematic expertise. However, this would require county-based agreement and "bottom-up" co-operation also by companies.

Among the DMOs' main functions as stated by Pearce (2015), Pike (2016), Volgger and Pechlaner (2014) and UNWTO (2016), the following ones are the most significant for Estonia: primary branding and marketing of the destination, strategic planning, organizing events, observing research and analyses, coordinating tourism information, sharing information, collaboration with stakeholders and companies, raising awareness and training, and organization management. The focus should be set on the area which is important from the aspect of the destination.

The problems of the destinations are related to the local tourism management, product supply and shortage of attractions. Henderson (2016), Mason (2008) and Cuypers (2017) stated that the destination and tourism management, marketing, accessibility, attractions, and experiences are the influencing factors of destination development and competitiveness. According to that, the DMOs should, in addition to marketing, deal with coordinating the development of authentic destination products and improvement of quality, gathering visitors' feedback, and initiating entrepreneurs' collaboration.

Today, DMOs are developing into integral leading strategic organizations of destination but herewith, the financial resources and the profitability of marketing must be balanced (Pearce, 2015; Borzyszkowski, 2015; Negrusa & Coros, 2016). The main function of the DMOs in Estonia is marketing, however, they are stuck in an outdated marketing package. DMOs should reorient to the bilateral content marketing: sustainable content marketing created by the DMO with high-quality tourism information and sharing the visitor experience in specific platforms. It is advisable to hire a marketing specialist for several DMOs or purchase the service to accomplish the activities of the intended symbiotic marketing strategy. This model would be possible to implement if the public sector, as well as entrepreneurs, are equally contributing. Non-sector cooperation is needed as well.

According to Destinations International (2017), 93% of DMO revenue comes from the public and 7% from the private sector, the main financial mechanism of the public money is tourism tax. In Estonia, this proportion is in the same order of magnitude (85% / 15%). The difference is the lack of a tourist tax and a high share of public sector contributions, direct grants, and project funding. There is an opportunity to increase the contribution of entrepreneurs to the financing of DMO activities, but the input of the needs must come from the entrepreneurs. Both, the results of the current study and Pechlner et al.'s (2014) show that DMO's own resource-based activities and sales of services will not be a sustainable financing model in the future.

In the future, DMOs need to be more driven by the logic of business and visit experience of tourism businesses, (Beritelli et al., 2014; Pikkemat et al., 2018). The transition to a market-based concept, i.e. greater involvement of entrepreneurs, is an option. The study found that the involvement of entrepreneurs in DMO activities, both financially and in terms of providing input, is modest. According to Komppula (2014), no destination or DMO can function efficiently and develop without the involvement of entrepreneurs.

The success of the destination is based on specialization and cluster-based destination management initiated by entrepreneurs. It is important to invest not in the number of members but in quality – the cluster should comprise entrepreneurs from different fields (attractions, active holidays, accommodation, catering, etc.) who are ready to contribute with both human and financial resources. This study also fits with the TID and SBA models described by Beritelli et al. (2014) and Destination Think! (2016). The transition from an all-inclusive community-based destination management model to a business model based on development-minded and talented entrepreneurs is one of the possible ways for DMOs to operate in the future.

Two solutions were financial models:

- the transition of the DMO to the LG structure and budget, which guarantees a more flexible budget and quicker decision,
- the transition to a bottom-up corporate finance model based on business packages.

The scenarios underlying the development and marketing activities need to be predicted based on traditional statistical tourism figures and non-traditional data (Destinations International, 2017; Costa et al., 2016). To plan DMOs activities, it is important to focus on future trends and on big data as a continuous analytical exploration process.

DMO depends on the political influence of local governments in terms of activities and funding. To ensure sustainability, both operational and financial models need to be diversified. No destination or DMO can be successful without the involvement of entrepreneurs and the transition to a strategic business model targeted at all traditionally targeted entrepreneurs is a future perspective. It is important to integrate the changes in the surrounding environment, and trends in the tourism industry into the DMO operating models.

**Conclusion**

The study was based on theoretical approaches and the results revealed several links with previous studies (DMO activities, problems, need for cooperation, financial model, etc.) that are explained in the discussion part of the article. The results of the study give an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Estonian DMOs and reveal development opportunities and examples of action patterns and financial models from abroad. The results were sent to ETB that uses the information to plan changes in the Estonia tourism management system to achieve better results and sustainability in the changing world.

The limitation of the study is that it takes under consideration only Estonian DMOs, RTOs and LG representative's opinions. No entrepreneurs from tourism sector were included. Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations made were based on the study that was carried out and cannot be taken as a whole package nor as a single model suitable for all destinations and DMOs. The next step of the research needs to explore the considerations of entrepreneurs and their feedback on the proposed action and financial model.

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# EVOLUTION OF TOUR OPERATORS' SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES: FROM NEGLECTING RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS EMBRACING POLICIES

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***ABSTRACT***

*Nowadays, the concept of sustainable tourism development is faced with numerous challenges. Even though it has been extensively researched, nevertheless, it provides insufficient amount of answers when it comes to the stage of implementing sustainable practices into destination's policies. Despite the significant progress made in the field, the process of implementing sustainable practices is still not completely defined nor elaborated. As tour operators still have significant impact on the overall tourism flows in majority of most visited destinations worldwide, their role in ensuring sustainability seems to be crucial. Their interest for taking part in that process has been changing significantly. Nowadays, it is twofold – to participate in the process of ensuring sustainability in destinations of their interest and to build an image of sustainable business entity, that would have positive impact on demand during the process of products and services creation and delivery. Therefore, the main objective of this paper, is to determine phases of evolution of tour operators' sustainable practices and their role in inducing these practices within tourism destinations. After the initial analysis of theoretical findings in the field of sustainable tourism development in general and sustainable practices of tour operators, the research is based on analysis of secondary data and content analysis of the published reports. As the research is focused on activities undertaken by tour operators, the analysis is limited to the publications and reports issued by the largest entities in this business and they are analyzed and evaluated qualitatively. The qualitative genre of this research is a case study. Research results indicate that the issue of sustainability has significant impact on tour operators' business and that is to ensure optimal quality of experience for tourists, prosperity for the local communities and balanced business results for tour operators. The main conclusion arising from this research is related to the specific motivation of tour operators for developing sustainable practices in their business to create better environment within destinations and to satisfy their increasingly sensible customers.*

***Keywords:*** *sustainable tourism development; tour operators; tourism destinations; tourism development; overtourism*

## Introduction

Sustainable tourism development is often considered as a concept easily implemented into destination development strategies, due to its rather reasonable content and understandable genesis. However, if this was the case, destinations worldwide would not be faced with deteriorating quality of resources and declining quality of life of local communities (Hunter, 1997; Saarinen, 2006; Dodds and Butler, 2010; Bramwell and Lane, 2011; Dwyer, 2018). Moreover, the ever-growing impacts of tourism development in different destinations have escalated and resulted with the emergence of the concept of overtourism, indicating that the limits to growth and accessible change have been exceeded. Many factors are influencing further expansion of overtourism, both in terms of its penetration into destinations' livelihoods and its geographical expansion. As emphasized by Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019), the emersion of overtourism should not have taken destinations as a surprise, as it is a consequence of neoliberal ideology and pro-growth strategies that have been in the focus of destinations' interests for decades.

A significant role in that process was given to multinational companies, dominantly tour operators, since the basis of their business lies in the concept of economy of scale, i.e. constant expansion of demand market. The overall sustainability of destinations is in the focus of tour operators' interest as it has a direct impact on the quality of experience of their customers. Even though sustainability is dominantly researched from the supply side perspective, it is strongly related to the demand side of the market, as tourists consume destinations' resources and are influenced by the hospitality of local community. Therefore, it is in tour operators' interest to ensure sustainable environment that would bring prospect to the local community and high quality products and services to their customers, bearing in mind that tour operators' products are increasingly becoming demand-driven.

There is little doubt that sustainable development is in the focus of both academia and practitioners these days. However, as those two parts of the research process were not synchronized temporally or substantially, it is now time to balance the improvements in their research to yield optimal sustainable practices for destinations worldwide. Even though the focus is not put on the same stakeholders in the process of providing tourism services and experiences, the final outcome is the analogous – to ensure long-term sustainability of resources within a destination and to increase the quality of life for the local community.

## Theoretical implications

Theoretical approaches to sustainable tourism development have been in the focus of researchers for many years. Even though a significant progress in terms of dispersing the research interest in this field and broadening our perspectives was made, it is nevertheless still somewhat vague how the concept should be defined and what are the roles of different stakeholders in achieving and maintaining sustainable tourism development (Lane, 2018). Sustainable development has come in the focus of interest after 1989 and publishing of the document Our Common Future, created by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. In general, it can be claimed that the concept requires at least "the maintenance of ecological integrity and diversity, the meeting of basic human needs, keeping options open for future generations, reducing injustice and increasing self-determination" (Wall, 2001, 567). As such, its adaptation to specifics of tourism system requires certain alterations in terms of policy adjustments, but the genesis of the concept remains the same. Difficulties with implementing sustainable policies arise from the complexity of tourism system and large number of stakeholders involved in the process of tourism development. “Industries that assume themselves to be riding some automatic growth escalator invariably descend into stagnation” (Liu, 2003, 462). We live on a finite planet and resources have their limits in terms of usage. Any different understanding of this approach yields undesirable, unsustainable results, as can already be evident (poverty, climate change, injustice in wealth distribution, etc.).

The size of tourism market is increasing tremendously, which was for long time comprehended as benefit for destinations, resulting with an increase in tourism receipts. Nowadays it is becoming more evident that such huge impacts have serious consequences on tourism destinations in terms of their environmental and socio-cultural development. The growth rates are impressive, with 664 million registered international tourist arrivals in 1999 (UNWTO, 2000, 2) and 1,326 million in 2017 (UNWTO, 2018, 2). Geographical distribution has been even more significant, with Asia and the Pacific having 15.5% share of the international tourist arrivals in 1999 (UNWTO, 2000, 2) while in 2017 that share was 24% (UNWTO, 2018, 2). According to the same source, Europe has retained its leading position, but its share fell from 59.3% in 1999 to 51% in 2017.

Among their numerous roles on tourism market, tour operators are empowered to direct tourist flows towards destinations of their interest (Schwartz, Tapper and Font, 2008; Sigala, 2008). Certain destinations, such as Spain, Turkey or Tunisia were developed dominantly because of tour operators’ interventions and investments. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is in their interest to preserve the overall environment of destinations. “By seeing tourism just as a mean of earning money quickly and easily, many other problems are overlooked, which can escalate with time” (Čavlek, 2002, 48). As claimed by the same author, it took some time for tour operators to become fully aware of their importance in this process. Namely, the shift in their approach was initiated once they became aware that it could affect their future economic stability. As each action has a reaction, a positive action in that sense included embracing sustainable policies, while the reaction is most easily seen in improved quality of products and services offered to tourists. However, the most important consequence can be seen in more respectful relationship with local communities and their environment.

As claimed by Carey, Gountas and Gilbert (1997), there was different approach to the question of sustainability during the end of 20th century, depending on the size and interests of tour operators. More specifically, mass tour operators were not interested or concerned about development of destinations in general, not to mention their sustainable development. Their interest was dominantly focused on increasing the size of demand and increasing revenues. This was especially evident once countries such as India and China became important factor of tourism movements globally, but simultaneously “insufficient thought is given to equity, fairness, and justice in tourism consumption and the need to impose limits in the interests of safe futures as tourism populations rise rapidly in an increasingly resource constrained world” (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, 4). Once we become aware of resources’ scarcity, it will become possible to balance sustainability within destinations, since it takes all stakeholders’ efforts to ensure positive living environment, thereby enabling productive business climate.

Due to the change in global environment it becomes increasingly evident that unlimited growth is no longer the only nor the best development option and consequently, unconditional exploitation of hosts is coming to an end (Curtin and Busby, 1999, 136). The humanity is slowly becoming aware of resources' scarcity and is adjusting living and working habits accordingly. In such environment, tourism must provide more meaningful experiences and added value to tourists that it is doing currently (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019, 16). However, this issue cannot be solved simply by discussing and upgrading social values, there are numerous strings attached to these problems, especially if we analyze tour operators in the context of their sustainable practices. Namely, long ago it became evident that tourism is reigned by oligopolies (Tapper, 2001, 353), which resulted in small number of companies involved in the process of creating and delivering tourism products and services. Such situation can result with either consequences on destination level – it can bring in numerous negative effects if companies neglect the sustainability as a development strategy or it can create sustainable environment in which both supply and demand side would benefit from tourism development. The latter option is by far the best solution for each stakeholder involved in the process, but it requires a lot of education, determination, and high level of awareness about this issue.

As concluded by Wearing and McDonald (2002, 202), tour operators often decide to include rural and isolated areas into their offer, but occasionally they do not possess enough knowledge about specific characteristics of those areas, especially in terms of knowledge or strategies of power. That can lead to deterioration of destination's quality and neglecting its core value. Furthermore, additional problem for a long time was related to the question of customers' level of awareness about the importance of responsible tourism services, additionally to low level of regulatory pressure for improving their performance (Budeanu, 2005, 95). That has led towards uncooperative environment within which the practical solution to sustainability issues was mainly delivered by the local authorities, which have had a strong intention to preserve uniqueness and diligence of destinations.

Since the 2000s both academia and the general practice became aware that sustainability in tourism is multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary concept (Sigala, 2008, 1593). That shift in the approach can be considered as a crucial milestone in increasing and improving initiatives to deal with sustainability issues on both destination and global level. Namely, in the context of mass tourism, the choice of travel destination was relied on the price; hence, only general benefits of destinations were listed in brochures, while any specific feature or potential were either neglected or marginalized (Curtin and Busby, 1999, 139). Such delivery of information and decision-making process have practically diminished the importance of sustainable practice in tour operating business. That has prevented the stimulation and preservation of sustainable tourism development at destination level, as mass tourism practices did not incorporate sustainability at any level (Budeanu, 2005, 90).

Once the sustainability became a matter of public interest and in the focus of business sector, tourism could move forward towards ensuring more sustainable, durable environment. Issues such as environment, socio-cultural and economic surrounding came into the research focus and the effects of globalization are becoming neutralized (Tapper, 2001, 356). Even though one might claim that the concept itself is altruistic, idealistic or even implies certain level of luxury, it is, in fact, merely reasonable path towards achieving quality management in destinations (Schwartz, Tapper and Font, 2008, 301). Therefore, the tour operators' business somewhat naturally adopted sustainability policies as strategic development determinant and more attention was given to the process of respecting the environment of destination of their interest, in any of its forms. That includes, as claimed by Sigala (2008, 1593), fair, open, and responsible harmonization process with the aim of achieving economic yield, environmental compatibility, and social cohesion.

While the tour operating business has gone far away from the former unsustainable practices, there are still several obstacles that need to be eliminated. One of the crucial issues remains in the sphere of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of implemented sustainable policies. Hence, as claimed by Epler Wood (2017, 199), "only the largest companies deliver consistent sustainability performance reporting, while most small and medium-sized international firms tout their philanthropic projects without providing a broader context of their firm's performance". Even though in its principal sense it seems rational to assign sustainability a qualitative character, it is easier to understand its impacts and volume if a way to measure it quantitatively is found. We try to express ourselves mathematically whenever possible, which in a way prevents social sciences to move forward, as this approach is too narrow in this case and its usefulness becomes questionable (Capra and Luisi, 2014, n.p.). Therefore the research in this paper is focused on case study and will include all relevant and available documentation published by the biggest tour operators, with the aim to determine the presence and importance of sustainable policies and strategies in their core business.

**Evolution Phases of Tour Operators' Sustainable Practices**

The history of tour operators' sustainable practices is not long. It can be divided into three major phases of sustainable practice development. The first phase dates to the beginning of 1990s when the International Federation of Tour Operators started to express particular concern about the negative effects of uncontrolled tourism development caused by tour operators in numerous tourism destinations. Damages for destinations came from commercialization of tour operators' interest and monopolistic behavior towards destinations.

The main characteristic of this phase was profitability before sustainability. The business behavior of tour operators was exactly as described by Friedman (1962), who claimed that business corporations, along with businesses in general, have only one social responsibility in focus, and that is to increase their profits. However, since business environment is constantly changing, the role of companies involved in tourism business must also change. In this phase tour operators were mainly concentrated on acting "green", rather than implementing all principles of sustainability. That was tour operators' reaction to the development of eco-tourism (Čavlek, 2002). Therefore, this phase can be defined as the green-soft phase as it included increased number of tour operators who started producing new travel products with green labels. Although, as rightly pointed out by Hawkins (1994), eco-tourism favours not only closer contact with nature, but also fluid host-guest interactions, some tour operators have been doing it in the wrong way. TUI was the first tour operator in the world to establish its own Environmental Department in 1990, and the British tour operator Thomson soon followed with initiative for the protection of the environment in destinations entitled "World Aware".

The second phase started in 2000 when the United Nations Environment Programme set up the Tour Operators Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development (TOI) with the aim to create synergy between tour operators who share a common goal to develop and implement tools and practices that improve environmental, social and cultural sustainability of tourism. This is the phase of tour operators' implementation of sustainable supply chain management. They started to integrate sustainability into five areas of their business practice: product design and management, supply chain management, internal management, communication with customers and cooperation with destinations (Schwartz, Tapper and Font, 2008). This initiative made tour operators more committed to corporate social responsibility and not only to profit. The balance of economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism development in any tourism destination became crucial for sustainable and responsible overall development of all stakeholders in tourism system.

Since tourism activity is marked with a very strong international orientation and follows the principle of economies of scale and scope offering the possibility of industrialization of the sector by using integration strategy focused on growth, it has attracted attention of multinational corporations (MNCs) that have facilitated the creation of different operations in one leisure travel chain (from tour operation and distribution, to accommodation, flights, operations in destinations – transfers, excursions, entertainment, etc.). By owning or controlling a significant number of accommodation facilities in many tourism destinations around the world, on cruise ships, incoming travel agencies, etc., giant leisure travel concerns, like TUI, have also successfully spread their power onto tourism receiving markets. This has urged these companies to implement sustainability practices into their whole value chain. This is one of the most important steps in sustainable tourism development of any company, since "a company is only as sustainable as its suppliers are" (Schwartz, Tapper and Font, 2008, 299). Although sustainable practice is more common among European tour operators, it is important that it is fostered by the biggest ones who have power and willingness to implement sustainable practice in their business, and at the same time make pressure on other relevant stakeholders in tourism to follow the same rules. Although an increased number of tour operators have shifted their attitude beyond profit to a longer-term perspective focused on destinations and well-being of local population, the initiative among majority tour operators was not spread beyond "expensive certification-based eco-labels" (Weaver, 2007, 67).

There is a long way to go from the attitude of profitability to sustainability as the major company's responsibility. Although global tourism represents US$ 1.7 trillion business, "sustainable tourism still only represents a small fraction of the global industry" (Rifai, 2017).

The third phase of tour operators' sustainable practices can be marked as the phase of embracing policies of sustainable practices. The phase started with TUI's sustainability strategy 2015 – 2020 "Better Holidays, Better World" in 2015 (TUI, 2015) by which TUI uses its influence to initiate sustainable change and to continue to ply a pioneering role in sustainability. That strategy is the result of merger of tour operators' initiatives with Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The strategy includes four major pillars of sustainability where TUI aims to advance sustainable tourism at scale within its own operations, along its value chain, across the wider industry and in communities where it operates.

This is the phase in which tour operators will need to take upon themselves a stronger educational role in guiding tourists to sustainable behavior while on holidays. Namely, tour operators are aware of the fact that tourists are nowadays increasingly conscious about environment and welfare of people in the countries they travel to. However, research conducted by the largest leisure travel concern in the world – TUI, points out to the fact that when tourists arrive to destinations, they are not completely ready to accept limitations necessary to preserve nature.

"Of course I would like to think that my holiday was environmentally friendly and that I was helping the locals where I travel to, but I do not want to pay more for my holiday." (TUI Travel PLC Customer, 2010)

"I care about the environment and recycle waste and act responsibly. However, when I go on holiday I like to relax and not worry constantly about such things." (TUI Travel PLC Customer, 2010)

Not a lot has changed since 2010. Namely, in 2017 TUI conducted a new survey that included its potential customers and their attitudes to sustainable travel. It was based on the answers of more than 3,000 respondents from Germany, the UK, France, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands (TUI, 2019). According to those results, sustainable behavior is most popular among German and French tourists, least popular among tourists from Sweden and Netherlands. Furthermore, there is a positive shift registered among respondents, related to their motivation to be sustainable. Unlike previous surveys, this one indicates that consumers are more selfless, with 44% of them claiming that their motivation to be sustainable is oriented to saving money, but 68% of them indicated that they are willing to make certain lifestyle compromises if it means that it would benefit the environment (TUI, 2019). This result clearly emphasizes that there is a positive shift in the way people think about the sustainability and their participation in this process, but also that the motivation for becoming a part of this process is more and more in accordance with the genesis of sustainable development theory.

It is possible to conclude that the next phase of tour operators' sustainable practices will have to be oriented towards education of consumers to ensure the desired outcome of tourism exchange on the market. Even though tourists declare themselves as being sustainable and oriented towards environmental protection, the aforementioned research result indicate that there still is a lot to be done in the process of educating consumers about the importance of their own sustainable practices. There is little doubt that tourism supply needs to take first and the most important step in ensuring sustainable environment, but it is the support by customers that is to ensure the success of the holistic approach to reaching sustainability. Namely, according to the results of TUI's survey, "a large majority of 66 per cent of respondents believe that responsibility for sustainable travel primarily lies with the travel companies rather than themselves" (TUI, 2019). This result clearly indicates that consumers must be educated about their role in tourism exchange process and they must be ready to embrace their responsibility towards sustainability while staying in tourism destination.

This also applies to the best practices for offering sustainable travel by which leading leisure travel companies are paving the way for change in this big business. Now, an increasing number of tour operators, from innovators in the field to smaller enterprises, try to ensure that their clients and themselves do not contribute to overtourism. Since overtourism has become a serious problem in many destinations around the world (Alonso-Almeida, Borrajo-Millán and Yi, 2019; Eckert et al., 2019; Musikanski et al., 2019), tour operators have started to introduce a variety of strategic approaches to address the issue of overtourism and helping to mitigate it while at the same time facilitating their customers to satisfy their wanderlust. The strategies range from tweaking tour dates or adjusting itineraries to minimise the impact on popular places, promoting low and off-season travel, offering unique of-the-beaten-path alternatives, travel in small groups with local guides and experiences, etc.

According to data obtained by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, the following set of standards for selling sustainable travel have been set for tour operators and travel advisors:

- maximize the opportunity in pre-, during and post-trip communications and marketing to educate clients about how to travel in a thoughtful way, and about the importance of supporting local economies and destinations
- require ground suppliers to train local guides to be aware of responsible travel practices and social complexities such as differences in religious practices, gender, and sexual preference
- craft itineraries that take travellers off the beaten path and involve staying in locally owned and operated accommodations and restaurants (these should also be vetted regarding best practices)
- take steps to evaluate and offset any carbon footprints
- eliminate wasteful actions like providing single-use water bottles, and make travellers aware of good procedures, such as not buying illegal wildlife-made products
- educate travellers to be culturally aware and sensitive to locals, especially when indigenous communities are involved

One has to should bear in mind that leisure travel giants will do whatever is in their power to keep their multibillion-dollar businesses sustainable. Profitability vs. sustainability? There is a long way to go. Only a good co-operation between all who share the destiny of tourism development can provide a future for all involved. They opt to ensure stable profit margins in the business environment in the long-run and customer satisfaction through added value. They will also lobby to ensure sustainable practices. Nevertheless, in the end, the whole process depends on the cooperation between supply and demand, as consumers will have to take an active role in the future development, ensuring that their actions are also in accordance with sustainable practices.

**Example of Tour Operators Supporting Implementation of Sustainable Business Practices in Hotels**

Due to their size, importance and position on the tourism market, tour operators influence the business policies of providers of services in tourism, especially when it comes to sustainability. In that way tour operators encourage destinations and all service providers to implement sustainable business practices that contribute to the long-term cooperation and competitive position.

As a leading tour operator, TUI issues guidelines on how to improve operations in areas of sustainable development and environmental protection. There are important guidelines that have to be continually adjusted and adhered to by, for example, hotels within TUI group as well as their partners. Plastic reduction guidelines for hotels (TUI, 2018) provides guidelines for replacing plastic materials and equipment in each hotel department, communicating activities and examples of good practice. Additionally, it clearly explains steps in the process of managing such activities. In its annual Sustainability report (TUI, 2019), TUI communicates all activities in area of business sustainability of its constituents, especially environmental protection, and climate change mitigation. Hotels in the sustainable development strategy of TUI Group have been identified as one of the key segments for implementation of sustainable policies, so they have particular importance in report. TUI carries out many activities and initiates implementation of eco policies in the hotel business with the aim of reducing CO2, waste, water consumption; introduces renewable energy production; but it also encourages greater employment of locals in destination. Special awards are given annually in individual sustainability areas. By implementing sustainability business policies, tour operators contribute to raising awareness of importance of environmental protection and reduction of undoubtedly harmful environmental impacts due to the increase in tourism turnover.

Aware of the importance of continued application of eco policies, TUI emphasizes the importance of communication during a period of adaptation and implementation of sustainability practices. For the end-customer to be better informed about the implementation of sustainable business practices in hotel, internal and external communication is required. TUI believes in the selling-by-telling-concept so that their clients could choose the hotel with the highest number of implemented sustainability practices in business. Therefore, TUI representatives are continually working with hotel management and request reports about progress in different areas that can be linked with:

- creative solutions for reducing waste, investing in renewable energy, saving water, etc.
- sourcing from local, organic suppliers, having own farms, vegetarian buffets, dishes
- engagement in the local community, adults, children, education, trainings, culture
- choices of building or other materials, awareness
- preservation of local animals, flora and fauna.

TUI has proven to be a supportive partner to a hotel industry as it, by implementing sustainability business standards, fosters knowledge transfers and sustainable business experiences. Numerous other tour operators have also recognized the importance of implementing sustainability standards, launching similar initiatives, and contributing to sustainable tourism development. Particularly in less developed tourism markets, providers of services are not sufficiently aware of the implementation process of sustainability standards in business or do not have expected support of a local community. So, the cooperation with tour operators in such destinations is of crucial importance. Certainly, tour operators have to be realistic in their expectations of achieving sustainability standards because it is a long-term process that requires ongoing engagement and additional financial costs.

**Conclusion**

We live on a finite planet, yet we somehow overlook the consequences of our actions on the quality and quantity of resources given to our disposal. This situation has been transferred to tourism as well. For a long time, the main objective of tourism development was to achieve growth, neglecting the importance of sustainable development for destinations and their inhabitants. In that sense tour operators had a crucial role in developing undeveloped or developing destinations, bringing investments into local economies, and constantly ensuring tourist arrivals. There was little concern about the quality of resources and local community's quality of life during that period. However, with the increased awareness about the importance of sustainable development and the appearance of more concern about each individual's impact on the overall quality of available resources, each stakeholder in the process of tourism exchange started to embrace its own role in that relationship. The same happened with tour operators, as they started to think not only about profitability, but also about sustainability. Needless to say, their consumers also initiated the concern with their requirements, so the shift in the market approach was not only sustainable, it was rather reasonable.

The research results emphasize the importance of cooperation between tour operators and their partners in destinations, as this is the crucial step in ensuring the sustainable environment. There is certainly a lot to be done when it comes to their cooperation with carriers (air and cruisers), the major pollutants in tourism flows. Sustainability issues will be of crucial importance in future development of their cooperation within these spheres. The main role will now be given to tour operators' customers, as they are becoming more aware of the importance of sustainable practices, but they also need to be additionally educated in terms of their personal impact on destinations they are visiting. Through the raised awareness of all stakeholders it is possible to create a more sustainable environment that would ensure prosperous development of any tourism destination.

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# INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY TRENDS THAT AFFECT CAPE TOWN'S MICE SECTOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR CVENT TOURISM CURRICULUM

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**ABSTRACT**

*In South Africa, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions) events have become a key economic sub-sector of the tourism industry and Cape Town is regarded as the leading meetings destination in Africa and one of the top 40 global MICE destinations. Due to the dynamic nature of the tourism industry, the MICE sector is susceptible to changes in the business environment. It is therefore imperative for university educators and industry practitioners to continuously gauge the trends that influence the sector to ensure relevant academic content and business sustainability. The goal of this study is to explore industry perspectives on contemporary trends that affect the MICE sector of the tourism industry in Cape Town, South Africa. The paper further considers the implications of MICE trends on responsive curriculum development. By means of purposive sampling, qualitative data was collected between July and September 2018 by means of key informant interviews amongst nine senior MICE practitioners in Cape Town. Participant perspectives were analysed using Creswell's six steps for qualitative analysis.*

*The four key themes emerged as the prominent contemporary trends, namely: sustainability, technology, delegate experience and safety and security. The MICE sector requires knowledgeable and skilled practitioners to effectively manage trend-related opportunities and threats to ensure business sustainability. University educators should consider future knowledge base competencies when developing responsive curricula for qualifications in the MICE profession. In order to remain relevant to industry and academically robust, innovative teaching, learning and research should reflect contemporary trends.*

**Keywords**: *Curriculum; industry perspectives; MICE; trends; qualitative methodology.*

## Introduction

Worldwide the business events sector is growing due to the increased frequency of MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibition) events and the rapid expansion of business tourism initiatives in many countries (Doshi, 2018). Congruently, careers and university programs offering event management have grown in recent times (Stone, Padron, Wray, La Lopa & Olsen, 2017) and the development of related curricula for emerging MICE professions have become more significant. The business events (or MICE) sector supports over 250 000 direct and indirect jobs as a key economic sub-sector of South Africa's tourism industry (Naicker, 2018). Cape Town is regarded as the leading meetings destination in Africa and one of the top 40 global MICE destinations (ICCA, 2018; Business Events Africa, 2018). Tourism generated from business events is an important economic contributor globally and the MICE sector is exceedingly susceptible to changes in the business environment (Weber & Ladkin, 2005). It is therefore imperative for university educators and industry practitioners to continually establish which trends affect the sector. Getz and Page (2016) mention that research related to trend analysis and futurism have become increasingly important to the events sector whilst Mair (2012) acknowledged the need for more qualitative research to explore meanings and experiences in business events. Laing (2018) identified a gap in current research that examines the challenges and relevance of conventional events in a modern, technological age. Although research has been undertaken on trends shaping the business events sector (Weber & Ladkin, 2005; Van Niekerk, 2017) and the future of event tourism (Yeoman, 2011; Jones, 2012; Yeoman, Robertson, McMahon-Beattie, Backer and Smith, 2014) there is no existing or current research on contemporary trends affecting MICE destinations in South Africa. Further to this, compared to more established curricula in the field of tourism and hospitality management, business events curriculum developments are scarce in South Africa (Fenich, Hermann and Hashimoto, 2012). Stone, et al. (2017) note that event management is considered as a relatively new area of study, and although research in events has progressed in recent decades, it is regarded as an emerging research phenomenon (Aguiar-Quintana, 2015; Park & Park, 2017). According to Rogers and Davidson (2016), although rapidly growing, the business events sector outside Europe and North America is still immature and lacks an intelligence base that can provide information on trends in the industry. In addition, the nature of ever-changing business events trends leads to a dearth in current literature on the topic. Therefore, this paper seeks to expand on previous knowledge on MICE trends through qualitative research and contributes industry perspectives on contemporary trends that affect South Africa and the implications thereof on responsive curriculum development.

## Literature review

### *MICE in South Africa*

In order to capitalise on worldwide MICE growth, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) was established in 2012 and has achieved a 5.7% growth target over the past five years whilst securing a bids pipeline of future MICE events as a key economic contributor to the country's tourism sector (SAT, 2018). Subsequently, the formation of the Cape Town and Western Cape Convention Bureau has contributed to positioning Cape Town as a globally competitive MICE destination and Africa's premier city for business events (Business Events Africa, 2018). The expansion of business events in South Africa is linked to the burgeoning African association industry, exponential growth in government events and sectors with cutting-edge technology and new business development potential (SAT, 2018).

*MICE trends*

South African Tourism has identified the rapid surge of millennial travellers, the increasing role of technology in tourism experiences, and opportunities in green and business events travel as international tourism trends (SAT, 2018). Globalisation, technological innovations and dynamic consumer needs have dramatically altered the way in which event practitioners operate in turbulent and ever-changing business environments (McLoughlin, 2015). Innovation and modernisation are crucial at MICE events in the digital age as it creates positive perceptions amongst delegates and adds value to the destination (Aguiar-Quintana , 2015). Practitioners are amending their events and operations to meet perceived future needs, and how they are doing this, has a direct impact on the creation of futurism in the industry (Baker, 2015).

MICE practitioners are increasingly compelled to organise sustainable MICE events as clients and delegates embrace green values. The greening of MICE events incorporates the sustainability pillars, namely socio-cultural, economic and environmental issues in event management, alongside concepts related to transparency, ethical governance and inclusivity (Jones, 2017). Crowie (2017) notes that events strain the environment on several fronts due to the over-utilisation of resources and event practitioners are proactively seeking ways to deliver more sustainable events. More event practitioners are incorporating greening practices into their business operations, objectives, and planning (Laing & Frost, 2018) by, for example, implementing environmentally sustainable initiatives that keep the carbon footprint small at venues.

Event tourism and technology trends are inter-connected as tourists use technology at all phases of travel and delegates have come to expect technological sophistication at MICE events. The advancement and affordability of hardware and devices such as smartphones as well as tools using wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) and radio frequency identification (RFID) are steering event technology trends. Whereas the availability and provision of the latest technological infrastructure have enabled numerous applications including virtual meeting technology, three-dimensional venue tours and social media which has transformed delegate communication before, during and after meetings (Lee, Boshnakova & Goldblatt, 2017). According to Benckendorff, Xiang and Sheldon (2019) technology in the event sector provides channels for information management, communication, and delegate management systems. Technology also supports the staging of memorable experiences through interactive multimedia entertainment contributing to delegate satisfaction.

Events are becoming more experiencefocused as clients and delegates are no longer satisfied with s just sitting in a conference room. To enhance MICE experiences for increasingly digital-savvy delegates, traditional event offerings must be replaced with modern, innovative event options (Laing, 2018). Modern MICE practitioners must consider the changing demographics and increasingly diverse cultural background of delegates when designing content and delivery of events (Lee, et al., 2017). The event experience should offer satisfaction and excitement, while meeting the business needs of delegates and incorporating mental wellness and healthier lifestyle trends (Kriva & Malama, 2017). It is paramount that organisers appreciate the importance of memorable event experiences in the meetings industry (Halim & Mokhtar, 2016) event planners must consider how attendees view the value of event experiences by creating enticing programmes with interesting auxiliary programmes.

The need for increased safety and security at MICE events has necessitated transparency around security measures and capabilities of venues, as delegates seek safety surety. MICE events are often large gatherings and the modern-day business events require extensive security measures to mitigate potential safety risks and protect event stakeholders (Tarlow, 2014). Tourists seek destinations where risk to safety is perceived to be minimal and they will opt to stay away from destinations where they feel unsafe (Fowler, Lauderdale, Goh & Yuan, 2012). Perceptions of a destination's safety and security influence travel decisions to a similar degree than concrete data (Tarlow, 2014) and perceived major security threats influence the tourism destination choice (Kurez & Prevolsek, 2015). Globalisation and world-wide access to news and information via digital platforms have increased safety and security awareness among potential delegates. Uncertainty around safety due to potential risks such as crime, terrorism and political unrest may negatively affect travel and attendance decisions to MICE destinations.

*Curriculum implications*

As the tourism industry changes, it has become imperative to adapt to circumstances in a relevant way (Yeoman, 2011). It may be argued that the growth of the business sector in itself is a trend as it has become a popular career choice with the workforce of this sector expanding rapidly, consequently triggering curriculum development in related educational fields (Rogers & Davidson, 2016; Millar & Park, 2017). University educators responsible for curricula development are tasked not only with the development of curricula in line with industry standards, but simultaneously have to deliver updated content in terms of industry trends. Fenich, et al. (2012) reiterated that the evolution of event industry developments and research should be applied to the curriculum development and modification of new and existing events qualifications. University educators faced with curriculum development should earnestly consider the knowledge and skills that are required from the industry in day-to-day event management operations (Silvers, 2010). To address apprehensions related to the gap of knowledge and skills between theory and practice in MICE education (Kim, Lin & Qui, 2015), it is imperative to gain current industry perspectives.

**Methodology**

This paper seeks to examine the key trends that may impact on the growing South African MICE sector and the subsequent bearing it may have on responsive curricula. Trends can be understood through the gathering of information from discussions with industry practitioners (Van der Wagen & White, 2018). Qualitative research is considered as the most appropriate method for research of an exploratory nature and the number of participants are less important than the criteria used to select them (Cresswell, 2014; Fox, Gouthro, Morakabati & Brackstone, 2014). The target population consisted of senior business event practitioners in Cape Town affiliated with the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI). SAACI is the official umbrella body that ensures professional credibility in the South African MICE sector. As the top meetings destination in Africa (Business Events Africa, 2018), Cape Town retains a selection of leading, knowledgeable MICE practitioners able to share real-world industry insights. By means of purposive sampling, nine interviews with key informants were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide between July and September 2018. Data saturation was reached when no new information was forthcoming from the interview data and additional coding was unfeasible (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006).

The data were analysed using Creswell's six steps for analysing qualitative data (Creswell, 2014) as presented in Table 1. To ensure reliability and soundness of the qualitative methodology, re-coding of the data by an independent researcher was performed (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Ethical research considerations included informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. To ensure anonymity and facilitate the narrative presentation of results, participants were assigned letters during transcription and are referred to as Participant A – I.

**Table 1.** Application of Cresswell's six steps in the qualitative data analysis

| Steps in qualitative data analysis | Application |
|---|---|
| Organise and prepare the data | Interviews were electronically transcribed, and the data was manually arranged |
| Read the data | Depth and meaning of the data was gained through re-reading and thorough inspection |
| Code all of the data | Data was organised as verbatim quotes were categorised, and colour-coded links were identified with accompanying memos |
| Use the coding process to generate themes for analysis | Themes emerged from categorised codes and memos and were grouped as key findings. To validate the reliability of themes, a second independent researcher performed steps 2 to 4 on the data set |
| Expand on how the themes will be represented | Narrative passage was selected to present the qualitative findings considering descriptive information from participant perspectives |
| Make an interpretation of the qualitative research | A theoretical lens was used to interpret personal perspectives and gain research-based understanding |

Source: Adapted from Cresswell (2014)

**Results and discussion**

Four key themes related to contemporary trends emerged as results from the data analysis and feature as the headings of this section. The boxed display approach in qualitative data presentation allows the researcher to extract and frame text in a box to place emphasis on a specific narrative considered as important (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). To encapsulate the crux of each theme in the words of the industry practitioners, selected key verbatim quotes from participants that are central the four themes of this paper, are highlighted using boxed display.

*Theme 1: Sustainability*

All the participants in this study alluded to aspects of sustainability as a contemporary trend in business events. Central to this theme, Figure 1 highlights how the three pillars of sustainability namely, people, planet and profit currently shape South Africa's MICE offerings.

**Figure 1.** Industry viewpoint: Sustainability

| |
|---|
| Participant A<br><br>Greening is a very big thing…When you look at a venue, you also look at what it offers in terms of sustainability, event organisers look at how venues source their food, how they deal with their waste. In essence, clients want to know where they are spending their money as it contributes towards the sustainable objectives woven into the fabric of their events. Clients now want things to be sourced locally which lessen the carbon footprint of events. They also want to support the local economy. |

Source: Authors' research

In line with the global movement towards environmental conservation, targets for greener business events have risen. Consequently, destinations promoting responsible tourism are competing to host green MICE events that will reinforce their brands as sustainable travel destinations (McCartney & Leong, 2017). At the time of the research interviews, Cape Town was suffering one of the worst droughts in recent history, which led to serious water scarcity and tourism concerns. Since then, the 2018/2019 rains brought substantial relief and water levels have stabilised, however the region's water resources remain vulnerable (Cape Town Tourism, 2019). This has catalysed more environmentally conscious business practices as explained by Participant D, "With the recent water crisis, we've seen a lot of focus on resource development and conservation incorporated into all facets of eventing and conferencing, specifically in Cape Town."

Interestingly, compared to festivals and sport, the MICE sector has been slow to engender excellence in greening practices (Jones, 2017). Green event initiatives for business events are often only incorporated when clients specifically request it as a deliverable. Therefore, the adoption of sustainable business practices may be lagging when greening is not a client directive as the onus is on the MICE practitioners themselves to drive sustainable practices up and down the event value chain (Jones, 2017). It will serve practitioners well to consider the constant evolution of people's values which is subject to change (Yeoman, 2011). Currently people have a heightened awareness of the environment and our impact on it, and this is of significance to business events as delegates "want to be more involved in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects and contribute to sustainable tourism" (Participant D). This statement is supported by Participant H who noted that there is a substantial increase in CSR projects across the MICE sector, including the production of "simple things like conferencing bags and lanyards…and entertainment like choirs and dancers by community development projects". Sustainable event practices could contribute to a destination's socio-cultural, environmental and economic upliftment. For this reason, industry considers it vital for students in MICE education to not only understand general sustainability concepts, but to learn about sustainable business cases in a practical context (Millar & Park, 2017). Students should essentially be able to critically analyse event scenarios, identify challenges and formulate practical solutions for sustainable events. As a case in point, Participant H used a medical conference as an example and posed the question, "Yes, you bring a 1 000 doctors here, but what legacy is the event going to leave for the destination?"

*Theme 2: Technology*

New technology continues to revolutionise the events industry and is a driver of change in the sector (Robinson, Wale & Dickson, 2010). To remain relevant, practitioners must anticipate rapidly evolving technology that may impact the business events sector. As a collective, the participants concurred that technology is a trend that affects the MICE sector in a variety of ways as displayed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Industry viewpoint: Technology

| |
|---|
| Participant D |
| We are definitely experiencing a lot of themes centred around applying technology to simplify eventing. The themes are applied differently across the MICE sectors… In conferencing we are seeing apps, badge scanners for lead retrieval and scanning business cards, and also apps to broadcast event information. In incentives, the theme is applied in a more abstract manner and used to encourage delegates to use this more in their own business… such as using a hashtag during the [business event] trip for Instagram, Twitter, etcetera. |

Source: Authors' research

According to Participant C, "Technology is one of the most impactful trends at present. People are travelling less to physically attend a conference" and "people can now stream events instead of actually attending the event" (Participant B). "Conference organisers are starting to make money by having inexpensive options such as streaming" (Participant C) and innovative practitioners allow delegates to login via an online platform "to access various sessions of a conference at a small fee" (Participant B).

Conference organisers require effective technological systems to remain competitive as "everyone wants to register, receive an invoice, submit an abstract instantaneously" (Participant A). Similarly, destinations need to keep up with the newest technologies to remain attractive (Participant E). Event technology and high-speed Wi-Fi are essential for integrated digital event experiences such as live streaming, video conferencing, electronic surveys, and event apps for programmes (Participants F & G). Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently a hot topic at every industry conference where MICE innovations are discussed (Participants A & H). Virtual Reality (VR) can be incorporated to simulate conventional site inspection and actual meeting interactions (Lee, et al., 2017). "In a nutshell, technology is impacting the industry all round" (Participant A).

The modern event management domain requires novel practitioners to enter the field not only with fundamental knowledge and traditional event management competencies, but also with the relevant technological skills set (Lee, et al., 2017). The digital expectations of clients must be met at MICE events to ensure delegate satisfaction (Participant E). However, Fotiadis and Sigala (2015) argue that technology should not only be used to enhance delegate experiences at events, but it should also be used as an effective educational tool at universities to bolster the technological savviness of future event practitioners.

*Theme 3: Delegate experience*

It is paramount importance that organisers recognise the significance of memorable event experiences for delegates in the meetings industry (Halim & Mokhtar, 2016). Organisers should keep up with trends "so that they are able to enhance the event experience" Participant B. One of the key trends that influence the MICE industry, is the changing demographics and diverse needs of multiple generations that are now attending business events (Lee, et al., 2017). Evidently, participants shared these sentiments across the board as Figure 3 highlights below:

**Figure 3.** Industry viewpoint: Delegate experience

| |
|---|
| Participant B<br><br>Attendee experience is also a trend that's surfacing more and more. Attendees no longer just want to sit in a conference and listen to someone talk for an hour, attendees desire sessions to be more interactive…especially for the millennials. Event organisers now have to take this market segment into consideration as they now too have tremendous spending power. |

Source: Authors' research

Delegates increasingly want experiences that positively contribute to sustainability initiatives at event destinations. According to Participant E, delegate experiences need to be more interactive, positive, and engaging and should include "authentic experiences where they get to interact with the local community and learn about their culture". Delegates want to "go local" and really experience the destination as part of the event (Participant G). MICE delegates often reflect what the environmental cost of attendance will be versus the experience gained from attending (Participant I). Many event organisers are now incorporating greening practices that allow delegates to contribute to the event's green objectives through participatory experiences in innovative spaces. Participant I shared, for example, that "People want to have an exercise bike in the middle of the venue because they charge their cell phones" with the renewable energy that is subsequently generated to offset the carbon footprint of the event. This link between delegate experience and environmental impact was especially evident during the recent drought in Cape town. On the one hand, it impeded on the leisure experience linked to MICE travel as convention hotels, for example, had empty swimming pools and limited spa services due to severe water restrictions. On the other hand, even though meeting planners could guarantee water for delegates at scheduled MICE events, they did not want to contribute negatively to the water crisis and opted to postpone or cancel their events explaining, "No, why must we have water if your local people don't have water?" (Participant I).

Delegate satisfaction is influenced by the quality of the event experience (Chatzigeorgiou, Christou & Simeli, 2017). Participant C stated that MICE planners have to offer "unique experiences, tailor made to meet the needs of the target market" to ensure satisfaction. Furthermore, MICE delegates want to experience innovative programme content that is delivered in exciting ways, and if they "feel that the programme has no significant impact on their career development", they will simply choose not to attend (Participant C).

The mental wellbeing and healthy lifestyle trend need to be incorporated in the overall event experience. Programme content and delivery should reflect delegate wellbeing and healthier lifestyle needs. For example, more meetings will take place outdoors and incorporate healthier lifestyle options (Kriva & Malama, 2017). Event spaces need to consider innovative experiences and MICE practitioners increasingly think out of the box to reinvent and create unique settings (Participant I). Venues that offer innovative, health conscious food experiences "beyond buffet food" and offer activities that are central to health and wellness of attendees should be reflected in MICE programme content (Participant F).

MICE practitioners need flexibility, knowledge, and skills to enhance delegate experiences by carefully coordinating experiential elements throughout the event. MICE planners should have the ability to customise the programme exactly meet client needs and know how to best incorporate more interactive event elements, such as teambuilding and CSR options, to enrich delegate experiences and secure future business (Participant E).

*Theme 4: Safety and Security*

The perception of major security threats influences the tourism destination choice (Kurez & Prevolsek, 2015). As an important sub-sector of the tourism industry, MICE practitioners rely on destination attractiveness as an important component in attracting business events. As travellers, MICE delegates also seek to attend events in destinations where they feel safe (Fowler, et al., 2012). Figure 4 displays captures the sentiments shared by participants of this study that that issues around safety and security have become important trends to consider in the South African MICE sector.

**Figure 4**. Industry viewpoint: Safety and security

| |
|---|
| Participant B<br><br>Security is also a trend coming up in the industry, with terrorist attacks on the rise and increase in crime, more high-profile events require more advanced security features to ensure the safety of event attendees. The current political instability and the current state of crime in our country [is a threat to the MICE sector]. Not too long ago the latest statistics for crime had been released in South Africa, and immediately thereafter the US and UK issued travel warnings. |

Source: Authors' research

Because perceptions of a destination's safety and security influence travel decisions data (Tarlow, 2014), it is important that the destination manages communication and messaging around travel safety. Participant A explains that "how [international] media portrays Cape Town, is a big threat if the message is distorted out of context. Participant A further explains that when international news agencies report on crime that occurred in an isolated unsafe precinct, tourists may incorrectly perceive the entire Cape Town as being dangerous, "without realising that Cape Town is big geographically" with abundantly safe spaces. In agreement, Participant C notes that "security is a massive problem affecting the MICE industry in Cape Town" due to plaguing reports on international news networks portraying Cape Town as an unsafe destination for delegates to visit. Globally destinations and countries are experiencing increased economic and political instability which affects event tourism. According to Participant H, when South African crime statistics recently released the crime statistics, the repercussions were immediate as the USA and UK issued travel warnings to the destination. \Participant D noted that this poses a threat to the local MICE sector "as large corporations are reluctant to invest their MICE budgets in our industry".

As technology advances in the event tourism sector (Lee, et al., 2017) cyber security and information protection is becoming more pertinent in the management of MICE events. This includes mitigating online payment fraud and the data protection related to delegates attending a MICE event. Participant H notes that international laws, for example the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) affect the management of international MICE events and association meetings and in South Africa, we similarly have the POPI (Protection of Personal Information) act. It is crucial for MICE practitioners to keep in trend with these regulations as Participant H explained by means of an example, "In the past for a conference we might have asked the delegate for a copy of their passport because we need the detail to put on the invitation letter. That companies now need new processes in place because you can't keep that information."

In reviewing safety and security trends, Participant E conceded that it is difficult to manage external factors that threaten the MICE sector, however "we can manage South Africa's reputation and educate people that it is a safe destination to travel to" with the support of national and local tourism agencies and convention bureaus. Similarly, education related to MICE events, should ensure prospective MICE practitioners are aware of trends related to cyber security and international regulations in delegate data protection.

**Conclusion / Implications**

The results have established that contemporary trends affecting the MICE sector are related to sustainability, technology, delegate experience as well as safety and security. The implications thereof on MICE education is for university educators to develop a responsive curriculum in relation to these developments. However, university educators should be cautious when implementing trend-related aspects in teaching and learning as trends continuously evolve in the MICE industry. Therefore, foundational knowledge and skills of MICE curriculum should be complemented with fluid, supplementary concepts related to advancements in the industry.

From the results in this study, sustainability issues and green event practices need to be embedded in event project management curriculum. Opportunities should be created for students to take an active role in creating sustainable solutions for MICE events and in so doing, strengthen sustainability concepts in contextual learning environments. Modern-day MICE education should provide students with an adequate understanding of business event technology concepts and foster teaching and learning environments where these concepts can be applied in practice. MICE curriculum should therefore include technological components, for example, software programmes to manage event projects and digital marketing design on social media. MICE related curriculum should be designed to fortify skills related to creativity, innovation and event design for future event planners that will be tasked with managing delegate experiences. University educators should continuously scope global trends in lifestyle, design, delegate demographics and delegate behaviour to create content relevant to contemporary business events. Current safety and security trends should feature as case studies in MICE curriculum to allow students to critically analyse, formulate strategies and mitigate safety and security risks that affect the industry.

In closing, to remain relevant in this dynamic sector, university educators should utilise industry platforms to engage with MICE practitioners on a regular basis and consistently rejuvenate curriculum to reflect current trends in business trends. Academically robust MICE curriculum should include progressive topics, innovative research approaches and updated conceptual frameworks that can be applied to modern-day MICE events.

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# DEVELOPING A COMPETITIVE WELLNESS TOURISM DESTINATION, THE CASE OF ISTRIAN COUNTY

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***ABSTRACT***

*Background and goals. Health tourism has grown significantly in recent years and is becoming increasingly important in many established and emerging world destinations. The objective of this paper is to analyse wellness tourism and to give guidelines for successful, long-term planning and management of the development of Istria as an internationally recognized wellness-tourist destination.*

*Design/methodology/approach: For the purpose of this paper two researches were conducted. The first research was conducted to analyse the development of wellness tourism in the world and current situation in Istria. The second research was conducted using an in-depth interview with wellness product managers and SPA directors of leading Istrian hotel companies regarding their opinion about the possibilities, the limitations and opportunities for the development of Istria as a competitive wellness-tourism destination.*

*Results: Istria has all the resources which are required for the development and positioning as a wellness-tourism destination. The competitive advantage of Istria is based on the quality of wellness facilities and attractiveness of the destination. Wellness concept is not only a matter of hotel facility; it is a cohesive story that ties together treatments, methods, products, and destination. Destination is a driving force in inspiring a potential guest to look for a motivating wellness offer.*

*Conclusions: In order to fully position Istria as wellness destination, two initiatives should be in place: branding strategy for wellness and strategic destination management. Istria, as a region with a long tourist tradition, can build competitive advantage combining wellness treatments with tourism experience as a by-product. Istrian wellness still has a lot of potential and un-discovered possibilities. What is missing on the market are theme SPAs, such as wine wellness, medical, Ayurveda and rustic SPA, sustainable SPA zero consumption, etc. This would add valuable significance to further strengthening wellness as a product on the market.*

***Keywords**: wellness tourism, Istria, destination management, opportunities*

## Introduction

Many countries are developing wellness tourism as a major segment of the growing health tourism. According to World Tourism Organisation wellness is a type of tourism activity which aims to improve and balance of all main domains of human life including physical, mental, emotional, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual. People travel for wellness to maintain or enhance their personal health and well-being. Due to population aging, increasing standards of living and turning to a healthy lifestyle, demand for health tourism is expected to increase even more. Wellness services focus on healing, relaxation or beautifying of the body that is preventive and curative in nature. The supply of wellness tourism is already very wide from hotels with spas facilities, to wellness hotels and thermal baths. To be successful health destinations need to offer unique wellness experiences in unique surroundings. Health tourism development is one of the main priorities of Croatian tourism development strategy until 2020. Istria, as one of most developed Croatian tourist regions, with a long tradition of wellness services and already well developed wellness infrastructure and designed wellness packages available throughout the year, can be developed as a unique wellness destination.

## Literature overview

Wellness has become a common notion in society, used often by the media and marketers to emphasize tasteful, up-to-date, and stylish products (Global Spa & Wellness Summit 2013). It is important to note that although ‘wellness‘ has been adapted by the business community, from a health point of view, the term is problematic to define. Whilst it has gained credibility and importance among the private sector, public health academics and professionals take a slightly different approach and prefer the more conventional principle of well-being as identified by World Health Organization (WHO) (Pyke & Blake, 2016). According to WHO mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (World Health Organization). There is no consensus around a single definition of well-being, but there is general agreement that at minimum, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfilment and positive functioning (Well-being Concepts, Centres for Disease Control and prevention).

The terms „wellbeing“ and „wellness“ are often used inter-changeably, but it should be considered that many languages do not even have a world for „wellness“ (e.g. Finnish, Hebrew). Many would argue that it is not even an English world and that it was merely invented using the combination of wellbeing and fitness or wellbeing and wholeness (Exploring Health Tourism, World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2018).

There are many definitions of the term wellness. Dunn introduced the term wellness into contemporary discourse. According to Dunn (1971) the concept of wellness - in the individual, the family, the community - embodies the *preventive aspects* of many of the things which we are now fighting in terms of disease and disability and social breakdown. Myers and Sweeney (2005) define wellness as a way of life aimed at optimal health and well-being in which an individual integrates body, mind, and spirit to live more fully within the human and natural context. Stoewen (2017) considers that wellness is a lifestyle, a personalized approach to living life in a way that allows you to become the best kind of person that your potentials, circumstances, and fate will allow.

It is the ongoing prevention of chronic diseases, aging and disability at the site of an individual's body and is conducted in a self-aware manner by that individual starting well in advance of any particular medical problem (Kirkland, 2014).

The National Wellness Institute promotes Six Dimensions of wellness: emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual. Addressing all six dimensions of wellness in our lives builds a holistic sense of wellness and fulfilment (National Wellness Institute):

- The occupational dimension recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work
- The physical dimension recognizes the need for regular physical activity. Physical development encourages learning about diet and nutrition while discouraging the use of tobacco, drugs, and excessive alcohol consumption
- The social dimension encourages contributing to one's environment and community. It emphasizes the interdependence between others and nature.
- The intellectual dimension recognizes creative, stimulating mental activities of an individual
- The spiritual dimension recognizes our search for meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe
- The emotional dimension recognizes awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. Emotional wellness includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about one's self and life

Healthy leaving has becoming a status symbol, as more consumers opt to flaunt their passion for wellness through paying for boutique fitness sessions, „ athleisure" clothing, food with health-giving properties and upscale health and wellness holidays. Wellness holidays promote the idea that consumers can take some time off, transform themselves and return as a better, happier person – as „wellness leisure" (Exploring Health Tourism, World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission, 2018).

**Wellness tourism**

Wellness tourism is defined as „travel for the purpose of promoting health and wellbeing through physical, psychological, or spiritual activities" and is linked to an alternative paradigm of health. In addition to wellness spas, it includes yoga, mindfulness and meditation breaks and travel promoting health, wellbeing, and happiness (Medical and Wellness Tourism Trends in Europe, Mintel Group, 2017). According to Muller & Kaufmann (2001) wellness tourism is „the sum of all the relationships and phenomena resulting from a journey and residence by people whose main motive is to preserve or promote their health". Wellness tourists go on holiday to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing. They seek ways to keep healthy and happy. Wellness tourism is the fast –growing tourism segment.

According to Jean-Claude Baumgarten (2018) wellness tourism could "be a solution to overtourism, by diversifying an established destination's tourism product" and opening to new areas that traveller might not have previously considered. The 2018 Global Wellness Economy Monitor points out that wellness can move visitors out of a country's over-visited regions to rural areas.[1]

The wellness tourism market includes two types of travellers: those who are motivated by wellness to take the trip or choose the destination (primary wellness travellers) and those who seek to maintain wellness or engage in wellness activities during travel (secondary wellness travellers). The bulk of wellness travel is done by secondary wellness travellers, who account for 89% of wellness tourism trips and 86% of expenditures in 2017. Global Wellness Institute estimates that wellness tourism expenditures reached 639.4 billon $ in 2017 (the size of wellness expenditure are measured by estimating all expenditures by international and domestic wellness tourist - lodging, food, beverage, excursions, shopping and in-country transportation). Wellness travellers made 83 million international and domestic wellness trips in 2017 which is 139 million more than in 2015 (Global wellness Economy Monitor, 2018).

**Table 1.** Wellness tourism trips and expenditures by region, 2017

| Region | Number of trips (millions) | Number of expeditures (US $ billions ) |
|---|---|---|
| North America | 204.1 | 241.7 |
| Europe | 291.8 | 210.8 |
| Asia-Pacific | 257.6 | 136.7 |
| Latin America-Caribbean | 59.1 | 34.8 |
| Middle East-North Africa | 11.0 | 10.7 |
| Africa | 6.5 | 4.8 |
| Total Wellness Tourism Industry | 830.0 | 639.4 |

Sources: Globall wellness Economy Monitor , October 2018, Global Wellness Institute, Miami

The wellness tourism market is projected to reach $919 billion by 2022 with leading brands like Equinox launching getaway concepts. Well-designed wellness programs have a return on investment of 1.5-3 times the dollar amount spent over 2-9 years (Health & Wellness Industry Statistics 2019).

In the last decade, health tourism featuring an on-going development saw a dynamic development primarily in wellness tourism at both national and international levels. The countries with the most significant wellness supplies and tourist movement are in the first place in Europe (mostly in German-speaking and Mediterranean countries), North America and Southeast Asia (Csirmaz & Peto, 2015). For the next five years (2017-2022) GWI projects that wellness tourism will growth by average annual rate 7.7% (Global wellness Economy Monitor, 2018).

In order to meet the demands of modern tourists and be competitive on the international tourist market, destinations of health tourism in Europe today offer integrated health tourism product of extremely dynamic growth, which includes a diverse selection of wellness, combined with quality accommodation, gastronomic offer, sports, entertainment and cultural activities that complement the tourist stays (Miličević & Jovanović, 2015).

Croatia is recognized as a destination for health tourism. One of the most important goals defined by Croatian Tourism

[1] Wellness Takes on Overtourism. Retrieved 19 August 2019 from www.globalwellnesssummit.com/2019-global-wellness-trends/wellness-takes-on-overtourism

Development Strategy until 2020 is developing health tourism and increasing the competitiveness of health-tourism services (Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020). Wellness offers in Croatia is dominated by wellness centres which became indispensable part of 4 and 5 * hotels. The largest number of hotel wellness centres is located on the Adriatic coast. The Croatian National Tourist Board's portal has published in 2017 the Health and Wellbeing - Full of Wellness web page, which presents a national health tourism offering. In the last two years, the Croatian National Tourist Board has focused on promoting health tourism with the goal of expanding the offer and to achieve an adequate level of quality.

Many authors have dealt with the issue of the competitiveness of health tourism in Croatia. Persic & Vlasić (2018) evaluated the level of competitiveness of market-oriented health-tourism services in the health/spa/healing resorts and special hospitals in Croatia. The research results indicated that due to the influence of the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, health/spa/healing resort and special hospital services were not significantly market oriented. Peršić at al. (2018) investigated the quality and competitiveness of health tourism services at the Kvarner tourism destination. Research results suggest that additional efforts are needed to transform existing comparative into competitive advantages of the health-tourism services at the Kvarner tourism destination. Težak et al. (2011) investigated the influence of wellness in selecting tourism destination in Istria County. A study focused on tourists' behaviour was conducted from July through September 2009. Considering the results, the most differences were determined between high level wellness group and other groups for most of the variables. High level wellness tourists were more likely to be of English and Russian origin, higher educated, with higher material needs (housing, car, clothes etc.). The perception of the destination was higher for high level wellness tourists and their stays in the destination was longer.

For the first time in 2018, the TOMAS survey also covered demand in health tourism and outlined the demand characteristics of all three segments of health tourism: wellness, health spa and medical tourism. According to research results for wellness guests, by far the most important motive for traveling is relaxation or 'recharging batteries' (79%) and then relieving stress (27%). Wellness guests are mostly foreign visitors (82%). Among wellness service users, 20% of them travel precisely for wellness. The most of wellness guests have the least college education. The wellness offer is crucial for the choice of destination for 26% of respondents, that is, determines the choice of accommodation facility for 30% of respondents. All wellness guests consume some of the destination's amenities. They are most interested in gastronomic offer, recreational offer such as swimming, hiking, and jogging, sightseeing of natural and cultural sights. They are extremely satisfied with the facilities and services available at the wellness centres. They especially emphasize the kindness and expertise of the staff (TOMAS Zdravstveni turizam 2018).

**Methodology**

Istria, as one of the most developed tourist regions in Croatia, has potential to become a prominent wellness area. Istria is already recognized as an attractive tourism destination thanks to its appealing scenery, quality of natural resources and rich local cuisine. Its valuable reputation has been gradually built on the authenticity and cultural heritage intertwined with an increasing quality and variety of tourism infrastructure. With its long tradition of wellness services and already well- developed wellness infrastructure and designed wellness packages, Istria can be developed as a unique wellness destination.

Istria has modern wellness and spa facilities that are open year-round. Wellness programmes, the vicinity of the sea, romantic promenades, picturesque walking trails etc. help tourist to achieve their overall well-being, healthy balance of mind, body, and spirit. The wellness services are based on the most modern knowledge and technologies and are enriched with an autochthonous cuisine tailored to the wellness guest. The wellness and spa packages are offered in varied Istrian tourism destinations.

Continuous investment in the development of the offer and improvement of the quality of services has resulted in a competitive offer of wellness centres, mostly within the tourist capacities in various locations: Rovinj (Grand Park Hotel Rovinj, Hotel Istra, Monte Mulini Hotel, Family Hotel Amarin, Hotel Eden, Hotel Lone, Val Saline Campsite, Valalta naturist campsite), Umag (Hotel Melia Coral, Sol Umag hotel, Sol Garden Istria Hotel), Porec (Valamar Pinia Hotel, Valamar hotel Diamant, Valamar Zagreb Hotel, Valamar Collection Isabela Island Resort hotel Palazzo, hotel Parentium, Laguna Molindrio, Valamar Tamaris); Vrsar (hotel Pineta); Pula (Parl Plaza Histria, Park Plaza Arena, hotel Valsabbion); Medulin (Park Plaza Belvedere), Novigrad (hotel Nautica, hotel Maestral ), Duga Uvala (hotel Croatia), Rabac (Valamar hotel Sanfior), Motovun (hotel Kaštel), Bjuje (hotel Casino) etc.

In order to capture a better insight of wellness offer and analyse the influence of destination on wellness as a tourism product, in depth interviews with managers of leading hotel companies in Istria were conducted regarding their opinion about the possibilities, limitations and opportunities for the development of Istria as a competitive wellness-tourism destination. Interviews were organised during August and September in 2019. They included wellness product managers and SPA directors from the biggest hotel companies in Istria while presenting the most successful hotel chains in Croatia. The main focus was on hotels with developed wellness infrastructure and variety of accommodation (hotels, resorts, camps). All hotels are located on the coast and account for 50% of total number of tourist nights in Istria.

**Results and discussion**

The most successful hotel companies in Istria have not only recognized the wellness as one of the main revenue drivers, but also have invested significant efforts in establishing their wellness facilities as most prominent in meeting international standards of the industry. The best examples of such initiatives are five-star hotels in Istria. The newest Grand Park Hotel Rovinj features a state of the art Albaro Wellness & Spa with over 3.800 square meters which is one of the largest spas and wellness centres in Croatia.

When looking at the concepts of wellness and SPA in hotels, majority of centres are comprised of two main functional zones. First zone is the SPA world with multiple saunas and steam rooms of varying temperatures, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, whirlpools, relaxation room. This zone is, in some hotels, extended with aromatherapy, bio and infrared saunas, cool plunges, hydro-jet pools, experience showers, ice falls, serial bath and Kneipp therapies. Second zone is a treatment zone including several individual but multifunctional treatment rooms, and usually one room dedicated to couples only. Treatments vary among hotels but are based on different types of massages, body, and facial treatments. Most of the hotels have a fitness center next to the SPA area and are equipped with a wide range of workout methods, including functional trainer machines, rowers, free weights, kettlebells, and cardio machines.

Wellness guests differ among different categories of hotels. In the majority of four-star family hotels and camps guests tend to be oriented towards family programs and their demand for SPA is targeted mostly to down-to-earth and results oriented, with skilful massage therapist greatly in demand to keep guests healthy and energized. For this kind of guests, focus is more on outdoor activities (SUP, kayaks, bicycles) and variety of animation programs, pool, and beach recreation. In five-star hotels, market is blended, and wellness demand is more diverse. Segments in this category are solo travellers, couples, and MICE guests, and they each have different requests and expectations from wellness offers and services. Hotels recognize an ongoing demand for special programming as well as for luxury treatment that are longer, more intensive, multi-modal and with rich storytelling underlining everything. There is strong focus on ingredients, techniques, and modalities. Wellness facilities must be more spacious and diversified with personalized approach and one-on-one service. This is in line with a virtue of the next generation luxury traveller who expects personalized approach. For the other kind of guests in this category (business guests, individuals/couples that want to explore a destination and enjoy other activities), quick-result therapies must be included in an offer as well. However, the strongest impact of wellness product is on the luxury market. For those guests who are extremely savvy, a generic wellness concept is no more acceptable. They expect authentic approach, high level of expertise and service and creation of conscious ideas incorporated in the overall vision of a particular SPA.

Trends that mostly affect wellness offer and its development relate to different aspects. First, it is the quality of facilities providing personalized experience and meaningful story that is implemented throughout the whole concept, from a facility to a treatment. All hoteliers agree that a SPA must tell the story that a guest can relate to. It reflects destination and its attributes. Most important is the usage of local, authentic ingredients and their interconnection with the local culture. Secondly, it is the quality of products that are used in treatments and SPA programs. Special concern is focused on a cosmetic which is expected to be organic and natural, with high importance of sustainable and socially responsible formula. New cosmetics with special effects (e.g. Hemp Cosmetics) is becoming increasingly popular. Third, market segmentation among wellness guests is becoming very incremental in creating wellness offers and packages. There are wellness offers tailored for families with kids, for adults only, for kids only, for more active individuals or for special purposes (relax, detox, rejuvenate). It is interconnected with the nutrition programs, sport programs and activities outside the hotel. Therefore, wellness concept is not only a matter of hotel facility; it is a cohesive story that ties together treatments, methods, products, and destination. One very important differentiating factor among hoteliers is to find the way to elevate experience and appeal to new generation of travellers passionate about sensations, flavors, memories and unique stories of destinations. This includes commitment of hoteliers to higher level of training and quality.

Some of the hotels have already started with customized wellness packages according to seasonal and purchasing behaviour while some hoteliers are now in the process of tailoring the packages targeted only to wellness guests. Wellness was not a primary product when targeting markets but usually an additional offer for a guest enjoying its stay in a hotel. As market needs and expectations have changed, some Istrian hoteliers have introduced wellness as one the main products in their offers. This is especially valid for shoulder season when wellness could play significant role in attracting more guests in Istria. Most of the Istrian hoteliers benchmark their ideas and market strategies on Austrian market whose focus on wellness as a product has proven to be very effective and brought significant results for the Austrian tourism.

According to hoteliers, Istria is a wellness destination per se. Its nature, surroundings, customs and way of life evoke a feeling of Mediterranean, relaxation and spontaneity. It is something most guests look for in wellness, to turn off from the daily routine, to invest time in self pampering, to treat themselves. Therefore, Mediterranean feeling, its sense and purpose should be infused into the wellness concept. Destination is a driving force in inspiring a potential guest to look for a motivating wellness offer. This is especially important now when travellers are strongly influenced by social media and visual landmarks communicated through different channels. What creates a motive is cultural and scenic appeal of a destination supported with local gastronomy. It is actually a destination that tells the story about wellness. For a hotel company offering wellness it is essential to develop its own local and authentic version which takes all aspects of local society, heritage and economy into consideration. That is why strategic destination development is crucial in positioning wellness as a product. It must be a holistic experience, as one of the hoteliers said. Guests expect that their entire trip meets their needs and therefore, a destination must be supported in every dimension to ensure excellence. As it is described by Rovinj's wellness expert, "it does hotel no good to create excellence within its own halls, only to have a guest be disappointed right outside their door".

What is unique in top niche hotels in Istria, it is their branded approach to wellness product. Some companies have chosen to brand their SPAs individually per hotel defining its name and main attributes. An example of this is Albaro Wellness & Spa center in the Grand Park Hotel Rovinj. Other companies have developed a brand that has unique concept implemented throughout the portfolio of company's hotels. The SPA offer differs among hotels and is adjusted to category and guest profile, but the concept and approach are underlined by one mutual signage, such as Balance Mediterranean Spa by Valamar.

Istrian hoteliers want to use wellness product towards the goal of balancing a year-round portfolio. In order to do so, they strongly argue that a set of factors must be fulfilled. Transportation links and regional infrastructure must be in focus of further development. Better air tours and airport transfer links are essential to attract more fly-in guests while for drive-in guests free parking must no longer be an issue and should be marked on the tourist map of Istria. Creation of diversified itinerary of activities in Istria is one way that wellness programs can be integrated throughout the year. But, Istrian wellness still has a lot of potential and un-discovered possibilities. What is missing on the market are theme SPAs, such as wine wellness, medical, Ayurveda and rustic SPA, sustainable SPA zero consumption, etc. This would add valuable significance to further strengthening wellness as a product on the market.

**Conclusion**

Wellness is a personalized service. If affects health and well-being of a person. It is not only a trend on the market. It became a part of our daily lives, almost as a daily hygiene, both physical and mental. People are hungry for different kinds of escapes where they can relax, forget and recuperate. Destinations and hotels serve as providers of this kind of retreats and they should encompass all aspect of human nature through wellness experience. In order to craft targeted wellness experience a hotelier must know the customer well and understand the destination intuitively. It must provide the concept that intrigues stories with evocative ingredients. It must meet the next generation traveller's expectations and create appeal. But to be possible to integrate all of this, it is necessary to upgrade legacy properties and make them more compelling while improving sustainability and insuring a year-round possibility. Destination is a driving force in positioning wellness as a product because it communicates main virtues and vision of what a destination stands for, it evokes desire and need, it creates customer journey from the beginning to the end. Istrian hoteliers are mature and aware of the wellness as potential strong drivers of their successes. It could be seen in their facilities, trained staff, and creation of new ideas but also in their alignment with a destination.

The competitive advantage of Istria is based on the quality of wellness facilities and attractiveness of the destination. The quality of Istrian supporting tourist facilities add value to the core product and help to differentiate it from competition. However, to fully position Istria as wellness destination, two initiatives should be in place: branding strategy for wellness and strategic destination management.

The paper provides information that can be used for strategic planning of the development of Istria as successful wellness destination. Destination of wellness tourism, to meet demands of modern tourists, has to offer integrated health tourism product. Istria, as a region with a long tourist tradition, can build competitive advantage combining wellness treatments with tourism experience as a by - product. This study is a foundation for further research.

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# SOCIAL MEDIA CREATE BENEFIT AND CHALLENGE ON TOURISM SIDE A CASE STUDY OF TOURIST AREA IN INDONESIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Among 33 provinces of Indonesia, Yogyakarta is one of the favorite tourist destinations. The two most popular sites in this province are Borobudur Temple and Parangtritis beach which have been visited by millions of people since 1980th. Luckily, Yogyakarta has several tourism objects such as Keraton (Royal Palace), Prambanan Temple, the hill of Mount Merapi, Malioboro food and fashion street, Breksi Cliff and Pindul Cave. Pindul Cave is a new object that had been announced to the public since 2010. This area has been getting high publications through social media posts, particularly on Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter because of its uniqueness. However, there were several times after its popularity increased, this site had disappointed a lot of the visitors, especially on April 19, 2019. The attraction had a big problem because the number of attendants is very large, causing the buoys to crammed and make it difficult to move. Optimizing secondary data than being cross-checked by big data, in-depth interview and observation this research found that social media has a significant influence on the number of tourists. Moreover, the weakness of technical management contributed to several problems on this site. This study contributed to the social order of markets from Jens Beckert which should be enriched by the role of social media in its definition. And it enhances the Castells ideas about information society that has to collaborate with the new theory of economic sociology. The findings contribute to enriching those ideas and give several solutions to prevent the next similar problems. We argue that digital objects i.e. websites, hashtags, keywords, can contribute to show online reputation, new actors and new cognitive elements that is central in Beckert's social order of the market.*

**Keywords**: *caving tourism, social media, institution, social network, and cognitive frame*

## Background and goals

As more than 17.000 islands located in the equator line, Indonesia has attracted many tourist destinations such as Bali, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Manado. Most of them are selling the beautiful panoramic and the uniqueness of culture as well as differentiation to others. However, many of them were not well informed to the people across the globe even local citizens. On April 19, 2019, visitors stuffed the Pindul Cave area in Yogyakarta; reached 2,337 tourists. Normally there are 200 - 500 people on weekdays and 600 - 1000 people on weekends. The increasing number of tourists had made a long queue at the mouth of the southern cave. The water attraction was jammed as the result of the circular pool filled with too many people. Of course, this case reduced service quality. Previously, the local government stated that the factor of increasing visits due to long weekends. But this research clarifies that the digital era has changed the official argument.

Alvara Research (2016) stated that many people around the world are exposed to the internet in their daily life. In 2016, 85% of households in the EU had access to the internet, which increased from 70% in 2010. The percentage of households with a mobile broadband connection via a mobile phone network quadrupled from 10% to 41%. At that time 8 out of 10 EU internet users go online with a mobile phone. Not only in the EU, this too happened in Indonesia. Internet users in Indonesia are growing dramatically and will become the largest digital market in Southeast Asia in 2020. Since 2015, internet users in this country have reached 93.4 million users (47.9% of the population) and will continue to grow until 2019 which is predicted to reach 133.5 million users and in 2020 will be reached 140 million users. Then, regarding the trend of using social media: Facebook, Instagram, Line, YouTube, Path, Kaskus, and Twitter people in Indonesia affect from one to each other using these media.

Utilizing the internet and social media also happened to the tourist Pindul Cave. From three earlier operators and district government websites, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram they inform the uniqueness of Pindul Cave as an attractive new tourist destination. But with the flood of information, there was an extraordinary number of tourists on July 19, 2019. On that date, visitors approached 2.500 people which means about 3 times the number of visitors on weekends. As a result, it caused the build-up of participants in the mouth of the Pindul cave, created congestion and buoy (a black inner car tire) to be immobile then disappointed many visitors.

This paper intends to explain why the phenomenon of the explosion of visitors on that day happened and explain why the attraction of wading through water failed to run well so that it disappoints visitors.

## Design/methodology/approach

Jens Beckert's explanation of the market from the perspective of economic sociology is the theoretical framework underlying this research. Beckert (2009) premised the markets are highly demanding areas of social interaction, which can only operate if three inevitable coordination problems are resolved. He defined these coordination problems as the value problem, the problem of competition and the cooperation problem. He argued that these problems can only be resolved based on stable reciprocal expectations on the part of market actors, which have their basis in the socio-structural, institutional and cultural embedding of the market. Moreover, Beckert (2010) argued that there are three types of social forces that have been identified as being relevant in explaining economic outcomes: social networks, institutions, and cognitive frames. (1) network structures install organizations and individual actors in a structural space.

Network positions reflect several things: the size of firms relative to others, reveal reputation orders, create an entrance and exit barriers to the market, and allow for the diffusion of ideas. (2) the relative force of players is bound in regulative institutional rules which allow and support certain types of behavior while discouraging others. Although the consequences of institutional rules are also evident in the network structure of a market field, they are nevertheless an irreducible social force. (3) cognitive frames provide the mental organization of the social environment and thereby contribute to the order of market fields. Institutions and social structures must be interpreted by actors in terms of their behavioral implications because rules are never specific enough to determine responses in concrete situations. Those social forces are inter-relationship to each-others. Thus, institutions, networks, and cognitive frames are not just 'neutral' devices to resolve coordination problems in market fields. By shaping the conditions of competition, they contribute to the social stratification of the market and are therefore subject to rival interests.

Meanwhile, Castells (2010) explained more about the digital era has made big changes in human life; mind, attitude, behavior, and interaction as well. In this context, since organizations, governments, and individuals are going online, Beckert's social order of market also changes. Because many persons are looking for various information through Google, ranking in Google search are become new criteria on reputation order to reveals digital-mediated network structures. Not only people and organizations that are going online, digital objects i.e. pictures, hashtags, videos, and others become 'new' cognitive frames to showing the mental organization of the digitally mediated social environments. Regarding the digital era, Foster (2012:16) stated that there have already been significant changes in the way news is consumed, shared, and debated, accompanied by equally radical changes in the way it is produced, packaged, and distributed.

Starting with secondary data, the authors prepared research design to conduct the study and collecting data. The secondary resource is obtained from various reports in mass media, online media, and social media exposure. While big data from Google is the main source of this analysis. Google Trends is an application provided by Google to record the results of search words entered in a search engine which is then displayed in the form of statistical graphs. These web search results display the popularity of the search topic over a certain period. The bias statistical graph is displayed by city, region, or language. Likewise, news related to trending topics is also displayed on the graph. This study uses Google trends to see the dynamics of the popularity of attractions in Yogyakarta that are of concern to the use of the internet. There are four community favorite tours that have been known besides Pindul Cave namely; Parang Tritis is a beach tour that is quite famous for the south coast waves of Java Island, Keraton Jogya is a Javanese royal palace that still exists up to now, Kali Urang is a cool mountain spot with panoramic views of Mount Merapi, while Merapi Tourism emerged after the 2010 volcano eruption which did not less interesting than other Jogya tours. Of the five tourist attractions, researchers want to see trends in internet users through Google by flipping the keyword name of the tourist attractions. Word search is only limited to the territory of Indonesia. The range of data was drawn for fifteen years from 1 January 2004 to mid-2019. Furthermore, the category was selected for tourism and the type of search was chosen via the web. This table will show detail on tools for conduct research:

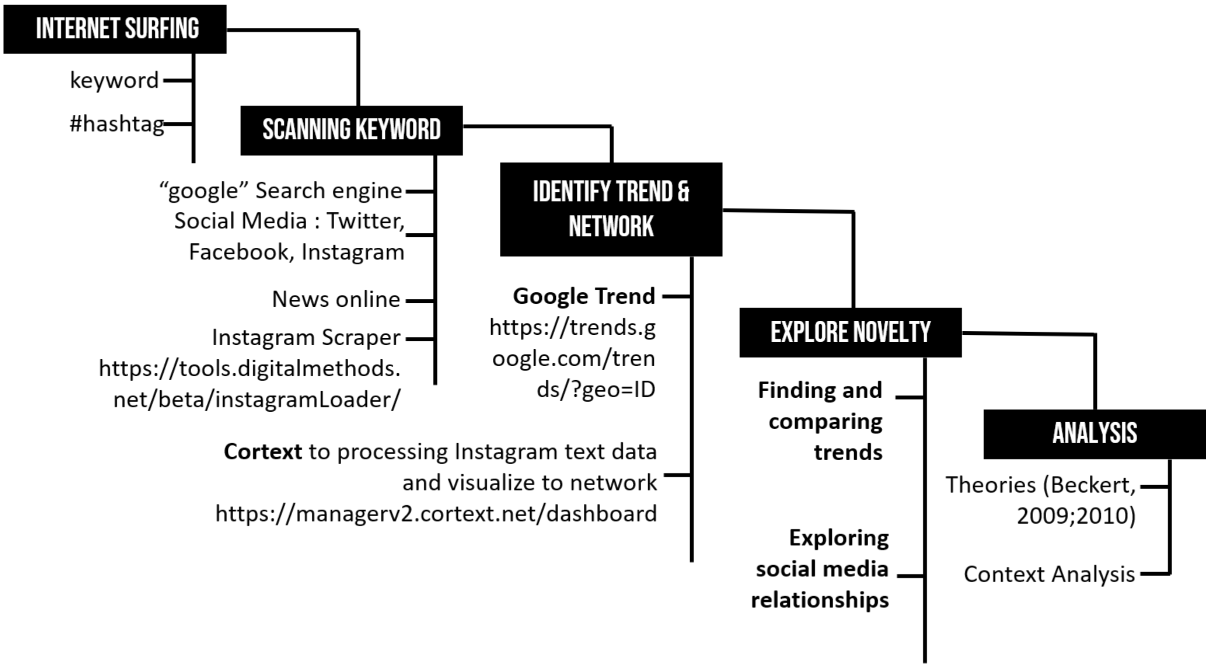
**Table 1.** Big Data Research Process

| Object of study | Input | Tools | Collecting Method | Analyzing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Google search | Keyword<br>*Parang Tritis, Keraton Jogya, Kali Urang, Wisata Merapi, Goa Pindul* | Google trend | Input keyword into google trend and collecting raw table | Screen shoot and dynamic trend analysis |
| Google search | Keyword<br>'pindul' | Google search<br>DMI Harvester | Set Google Search result into 100<br>Input keyword to Google search<br>Extract all URL using DMI Harvester<br>Collect extracted URL to Microsoft Excel | categorizing website manually by category: tourism and travel website, academic website, media website |
| Instagram | Hashtag<br>#pindul | Instagram Scraper<br>Gephi/Cortext | Input Pindul to Instagram Scraper<br>Set maximal output (max: 10.000)<br>Downloading csv file | Open CSV in Gephi or Upload to Cortext<br>Extract hashtag with maximal output (1000)<br>Visualize as heterogenous network map |

Source: Authors' research

Based on this table above, the authors showed the source for collecting the data. Then, there were several stages to collect and analyzing data as below:

**Figure 1.** Collecting and analyze method




Source: Authors' research

In the first stage, the researchers conducted internet surfing to find information related to the tourism object of this cave. The output of this internet surfing provides preliminary knowledge and some important keywords and hashtags for further digital research. The keywords and hashtags obtained are used to carry out the process of searching data on google search engines, social media, and online news. The information and data found will develop when compared to the initial process.

In scanning the keywords and hashtags, it would be found the relevance of the Pindul cave with other attractions as a comparative study. Researchers also specifically conducted data collection through the "Instagram Scraper" to further explore the hashtags related to the cave. The results of the keyword scanning of the scanning process are used to determine trends through Google trends while the results of the "Instagram Scraper" are processed using online cortex software where this software processed Instagram text data into network maps. The output of the "identify trend and network" results in the form of trend graphs and social network mapping are the material for comparative analysis of trends and networks. The findings of the comparison of trends and exploration of social networks are analyzed.

Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews on 23-26 July 2019 which were conducted to ask key informants (organizer of tourism objects and visitors) regarding their experience and comments about tourist side managements. Then, the data was enriched by observation of this tourist side along a day from morning to afternoon.

### Research limitations

The results of this study can only be projected in discussing tourist destinations that have cultural characteristics such as Indonesia, especially in natural tourist objects. It cannot be projected immediately to the case of other countries definitely. Whether any scholar to referred it, it should be adjusted to the new subject matters' characteristics.

**Results**

Unique cave structure to explore by wading through the clear river water flow is a blessing for the local people to make it a tourist destination. Pindul Cave is a very exceptional one, wherein this cave there is a river that passes sideways it. Activities that are generally carried out on this tour are experiencing the water journey along the cave. It has a length of 350 meters with a width of 5 meters and height from the surface of the water to the ceiling of the cave is estimated to be about 5 m. There are three zones that must be traversed when passing in it, namely the bright zone, the dark zone, and the dim zone. The bright part is located at the admission of the mouth of the cave. The dim zone is located several meters after inflowing the cave entrance. And the Dark Zone is in the middle of the center in Pindul Cave. Right in the middle of the cave, there is a fairly large room, and at the roof of it, there is a hole, which is usually used as a vertical entrance by the Search and Rescue (SAR) Team. From this hole, sunlight can enter the cave and make an exotic sensation. So that makes the scenery in Pindul Cave become extraordinarily beautiful. Every visitor who goes down the Pindul Cave using a buoy will find a very large stalactite. The size of the stalactite reaches 5 stretches of adult hands. There is a myth that says that water that drips from stalactites can make you beautiful and youthful and for men, dripping water can increase male vitality. This attraction could be called a cave tubing which is activity along the river in a cave by using a buoy. It is different from rafting which is done in the swift river water flow while cave tubing is done in a calm one.

However, ten years ago Pindul Cave was only known by residents around Bejiharjo Village, Karangmojo District, Gunungkidul Regency. River flow in front of the entrance and exit Pindul Cave was used by local residents for bathing, washing, and fishing. In addition, this cave was also considered sacred, so that not many people dared to enter the cave corridor. Eventually, all these assumptions changed when a number of students from Gadjah Mada University (UGM) majoring in Geology conducted research in the Pindul Cave that aims to only examine rocks and water content. In fact, while doing research, the student group was amazed at the beauty of the stalagmites and stalactites in the cave. Not only that, the phenomenon of river water flowing in the cave made this place very exclusive. Even though the water was raining heavily, it did not flood, because it was only collected from the pores of rocks that created springs. There was no overflow of water sources from other places, so even though the heavy rain the cave was safe for humans to enter. The idea arose from the student group to make this cave a tourist attraction.

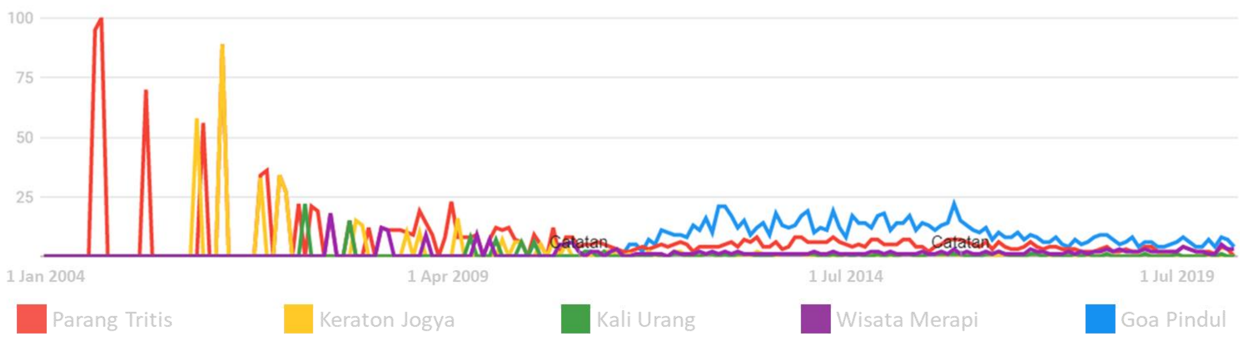
Following up on the student's idea, the local community assisted by a non-profit organization involving more competent geologists, began to conduct more in-depth studies. The results of the study were taken to the Gunung Kidul Tourism Office who then conducted a series of trials. A local leader, Subagyo pioneered and led the opening of the cave with starting from cleaning, approaching village elders, conducted several rituals, and empowering the local community where at that time, the cave used as a garbage dump, nest of thousand bats, smelly, dark and scary so that make people worry to entry. Then he became a Chairperson of Bejiharjo Tourism Village (Dewa Bejo, the first operator for tourist guide). After it was looked clean, he committed to open Pindul as a tourist attraction. The number of visitors at that time was only 100 people. Formally the tourism object of Pindul Cave was inaugurated by the Regent of Gunungkidul on October 10, 2010. Later on, this tourist spot is better managed by the local Pokdarwis (Tourism Awareness Group), so it had fairly complete facilities even though this cave was a properly new tourist spot.

The following year visitors jumped to 70,000-80,000 people and during January-August 2013, there were 122,000 people. Imagine, in an instant Pindul Cave was able to become a magnet for thousands of people from various regions in Indonesia, even foreign countries. Bejiharjo won the award as the first winner of a Yogyakarta and national level tourism village in 2012. The village also received the National Grant "PNPM Mandiri" as Tourism Village award in the same year and time-honored The Ministry of Tourism Award.

*Trend of Social Network*

Most visitors come to Pindul Cave attraction caused by information through news and or picture from their colleagues or relatives on their cell phones. The habits of people to consume, produce or reproduce information through social media amazingly. In this case, social media do not only attract many people to come in but also gave difficulties in managing to serve visitors well. As mentioned by Castells (2010) that society is now connected in a network of information technology that has changed various habits and realities in human life. The role of social media was being increasingly recognized in the tourism context, which was believed to be an information-intensive industry heavily relying on effective communication. (Li, Cunqing, 2019) In Indonesia, social media began to be known since 2008 when Facebook became a trend in communication. Then followed by Twitter in 2009 and Instagram in 2010. How the tendency of social media coverage of the Pindul Cave since 2004 to the present can be seen in the graph below

**Figure 2.** Popularity trend of tourism sides in Yogyakarta




Source: Authors' research

The results from Google Trend show the display of statistical graphs in Figure 2. From the beginning of 2004 to mid-2006, Parang Tritis tourism became a keyword search for users, but subsequently decreased and was replaced by the Yogyakarta Palace which had increased. Parang Tritis Tourism and the Yogyakarta Palace are tours that have long been known by tourists, both domestic and foreign. Especially the Keraton Yogya (Yogyakarta Palace) is a tourist attraction that is unique in its integration of formal and traditional government.

The perception formed so far in the minds of the people, excursions are beaches, mountains, and heritage. While the cave was not a tourist destination. Pindul Cave (Goa Pindul) tourism previously was not widely known by the public. In addition to nature tourism, which was owned by the Pindul area, cave travel did not attract much attention to tourists. But, after the massive social media reporting has discussed information about this tour, only then did many people start to know it. Increased interactions that expose personal activities through social media make digital technology increasingly a center of information for collective action. (Bennet, 2011) Pindul Cave was slowly shifting the position of tourism objects which had been so dominant as domestic and foreign tourist destinations. When a tourist attraction emerged that combined cave with water attraction, Pindul Cave became a travellers' destination that had a class be categorized as adventure tourism. With the high utilization of social media, the community gradually began to recognize Pindul Cave and at the same time gave rise to the perception that this location was a very interesting and unique tourist destination because it did not exist in Indonesia formerly. It was relevance with, Rebecca Dolan's (2019) argument that social media engagement behavior affected the mindset of individuals who were actively involved. Tourism which was previously a tertiary need has now shifted to one of the secondary needs. The Deputy for Tourism Destination Development in the Ministry of Tourism explained that the World Tourism Agency (UNWTO) in 2013 had stated that adventure tourism is growing the fastest among other tourism industry products. Furthermore, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) stated that 67 percent of adventure tourist expenses occur in the area (destination) they visited. (Jawa Pos, 28 Oktober 2018). This was also in accordance with the research of Antoaneta-Carina POPESCU (2014) which stated ecotourism and adventure tourism have an attraction for tourists

However, the positive trend of attractions in Pindul Cave was not balanced by the existence of good management. It was less professional to manage this attraction. It was seen when there was a surge in visitors, attractions have not been able to manage properly. Tourist sites became overloaded; they were jostling each other in the tourist area. That condition received a negative response from netizens.

*Institution*

There were several ways to visit Pindul cave. From Karangmojo sub-district, they could enter through the villages of Wiladeg, Ngawis, Plumbungan, and Jatiayu. It could also be reached from Wonosari City in the direction of Grogol or from Semin District, Ngawen District, and Nglipar District. All roads leading to the location had been paved and had relatively the same characteristics on both sides of the road which made sometimes cause confusion at the crossroad. The visitor could find many Pindul cave directions that were made by operator offices. The data was uploaded by them who gave a mark on the google map. Practically there was no official sign that are sufficiently adequate to provide road directions but on the other hand some signs were made by operators heading to their offices rather than leading to the Pindul cave gate directly. Because the instructions were not an official guide from the Gunungkidul District Transportation Department, the directions on the Google map were also confusing. The operators argued that in their office the visitors could rent the buoy, life jacket and guide service as conditions for being able to enjoy cave tubing tours.

Before entering Pindul Cave, visitors should be charged a tourist entrance ticket of IDR. 40,000. (€ 2.53). This price included the cost of cave tubing equipment rental (buoy, life raft jacket), local guides, and insurance and using a small locker room to keep their property. Small shops were nearby to facilitate tourists to buy short new pants, slippery and mobile phone protective plastic. Before starting cave tubing, visitors were briefed on the rules and prohibitions while exploring the cave. The operators claimed that most of the guides had a certificate and license in water adventure. So, visitors had not to be afraid to enjoy the cave tubing about approximately 45 minutes.

Officially, there were 4 operators appointed by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Gunungkidul Regency Government: Dewa Bejo, Wira Wisata, Panca Wisata, and Tunas Wisata. By the Regency Government, the operators had been organized in a Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) container with authority within the limits of as guides, parking, and culinary managers, each of whom must maintain the safety and comfort of tourists. But practically it had become 11 operators. Then, all operators were competing to attract as many visitors as possible. Through their website, operators were very active in providing the latest information through Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Moreover, the Government Tourism Office website also published information about Pindul Cave as one of the attractive sides. Thus, information about Pindul Cave became quite crowded in social media.

Besides the culture of the friendly Yogyakarta community, avoiding violence and the absence of open conflict experiences in tourist areas in Yogyakarta so far, government authorities seemed to let go of what was happening on the ground. Lack of anticipation from the authorities caused the events of 19 April 2019. So, while the tourist filling the area, there was no regulation to prevent the stagnation of attraction. To begin the adventure of entering the cave, visitors did not have to pass through a certain gate that was awake but could directly approach the mouth of the cave after wearing a life jacket and carrying a buoy with the direction of the guide. But in the absence of officers who manage the entrance, all operators might bring groups of tourists at any time. As a result, no party regulated the number of visitors who had entered the queue that would move in the cave. When there was an explosion in the number of tourists who arose, the guides who had the obligation to meet the expectations of their customers became confused since all operators also had the same desire.

Moreover, the absence of strict guidelines from the government, the lack of coordination among operators, it turned out that Handoko (2019) found that among the existing operators competing were sometimes unfair in capturing visitors who would enjoy Pindul Cave. That was, the agency could not manage the actors in Pindul Cave tourism and does not anticipate the surge of visitors who would come on a long holiday like on 19 April. The lacked of anticipation by the authorities with the plans of the community to come to Pindul Cave on April 19, 2019, caused more than 2000 visitors to come to fill the area to navigate the river flow in the cave which was relatively not too broad. The crowd of people on buoys with a condition of being unable to flowing and unclear directions from the guides caused attractions that should have been exhilarating instead of causing disappointment. Besides cursing and sharing these bad experiences through social media, visitors also showed that there were a lot of plastic piles in the area as a result of visitors being impatient because they were in a position of stagnation in the middle of the river flow. Then, social media can also gave a bad impact i.e. several photos about the number of scattered plastic bottles stimulated many negatives comments to management of the tourist area from various parties such as the local government, environmentalists and friends of other tourist areas.

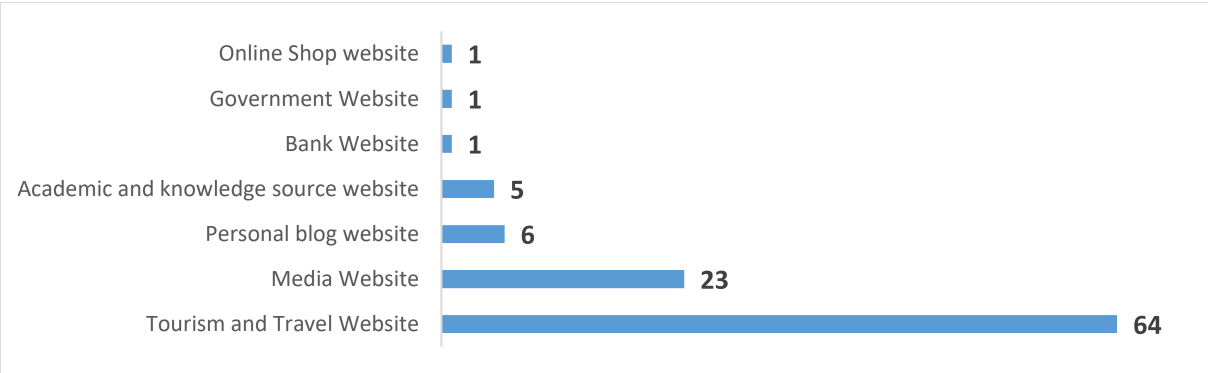
The social structure in the market field not only revealed relations between actors in the form of network structures formed in social media, but also ruled of institutions and social organizations that shape it. The perspective of the institution provided an overview of the structure and agent mechanism in the stability and changes in the market field. That was, the institution also had a role in shaping public perception, in this case, netizens in cyberspace. When weak institutions in managing tourism, objects became counter-productive. Less professional management and weak relations contributed a negative image. However, if the institution had the authority to monitor discussions on social media, this incident could certainly be better managed.

Institutional strengthening must be important because it was a dominant system of formal and informal elements that were interconnected in the market field. This phenomenon strengthens Beckert's argument that the interrelationship of three social structures is impossible to separate from one another. When firming up institutions, there will be a positive impact on the structure of social networks and cognitive frames.

*Social Actors and Institutions (Digitally Mediated)*

While the Yogyakarta government and community became central actors in an offline social world, many social actors also could find through Google search since 'tourism recommendations' searching culture was important. This graph below shows the distribution of an actor website based on top 100 Google search with keyword 'Pindul':

**Figure 3.** Type of Websites from Google Search with Keyword 'Gua Pindul'




Source: Authors' research

In the previous section, we found that how Google trends showed the emergence of Googling culture on looking for tourist recommendations. This culture not only for tourists but also important for many actors to compete to become the top 1 in Google search. Based on this graph, we found that increased tourism and travel website that refers to Pindul. Some of them specifically had ratings and polling tools for internet users to recommend Pindul tourism (picture 2). This is an example of how online reputation is possibly changing the traditional social order of the market. Some websites also specifically focus on Pindul tourism i.e. http://goapinduldua.com, http://goapindultrip.com, https://goapindul-gunungkidul.business.site, https://goapindul.com, https://wisatagoapindul.co.id, https://pindul.net, and others.

**Figure 4.** Rating for Pindul Tourism


Source: Authors' research

Online media were in the second position on Pindul tourism. Media had two contributions to making social order of the market. First, the issue could reshape social relations among actors. For example, news on a tourist death in Pindul location were possible can contribute to cognitive frame and tourist decision then they would prioritize this news rather than other website actors as a valid source. Second, the media had a local network that makes news always update. For example, in the Pindul case, *kompas.com* and *tribunnews.com* had a local based website through sub site *regional.kompas.com* and *jogja.tribunnews.com*.

While the tourism website competed on rating, the personal blog had another role in shaping the social order of the market. The power of narratives, storytelling, personal pictures made personal blogs had important for tourist decisions. It supported with fact that the tourist websites also were not limited to the rating score, but the tourist would refer to comments on those websites. Social institutions also appeared on Google search. Meanwhile university websites looked through referring to an academic paper on Pindul i.e. the economic contribution of Pindul location, tourist location management, and the District Secretary Office website information looked like less attractive than private's ones.

*d. Hashtags as Cognitive Frame*

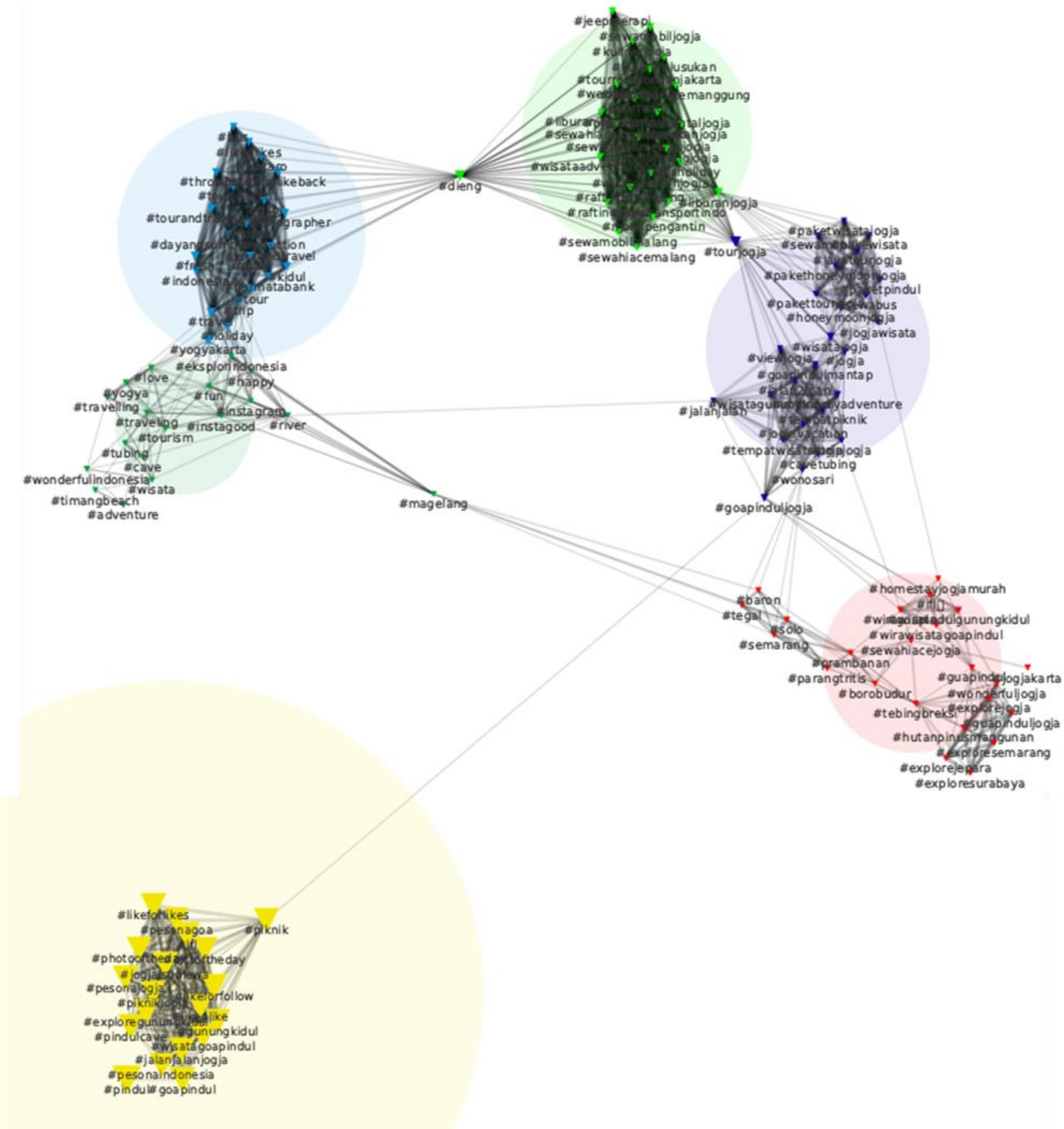
Since social media became a site of the public sphere that internet users could share, compete, contribute and participate in social issues, one of the powerful digital objects that make this site was a hashtag. The hashtag in tourism converted important that not only became searchable (as in our discussion on Google Trend) or competed social actors to get attention (our discussion on Google Search) but also made it more and bigger, overlapped, and connected public. These logics became a popular cognitive frame to shape the social order of markets that were going mediated by digital. In this network graph, we can see how hashtags produce to make a wider audience on Pindul:

Instagram's Hashtag was more copy-paste using that differs from a Twitter hashtag that has nature for organizing. It assumed that each group showed 5 copy-paste hashtags, so we focused on "bridge hashtag" that connected each group. Some groups (green, blue, yellow) were connected by only one hashtag. These mean that some Instagram users became key actors who made the audience wide. Two bridge hashtag referred to the general area that Pindul located i.e. #Dieng, #magelang, #tourjogja. Hashtag creators maybe thought that it can get attention from those who would come to Dieng (maybe for camping) or for general-purpose to Magelang. #piknik (English: travel) also became only one bridge hashtag that users might be used to get attention from those who did not decide travel destinations. Another hashtag was specific for Pindul: #goapinduljogja

Cognitive frames were ideas, issues, or knowledge based those were able to construct stability, institutional changes, and networks in the market. Hashtags were reflection of cognitive frames formed by netizens. They who interacted in cyberspace tried to reproduce the attraction of these attractions. Especially for dominant actors who had cognition who were able to give effect to the greatest number of followers. They were able to reproduce the structure and format of social networks in a new frame in assessing the appeal of the caves. Reproductive development and deepening of knowledge contributed to seeing this attraction from a newer perspective

Cognitive frames provided mental organization to the social environment that contributes to the order of the market field. Hashtags had influence in shaping social institutions and structures those netizens must interpret in this case the implications of conversational behavior in cyberspace. The weakness of institutions having rules is never specific enough to determine responses in concrete situations (Beckert, 2010, p. 610). It was seen the weak response from government institutions and the management of tourist attractions when there was a surge in visitors. Institutional theorists (Edelman et al. 1999; Jackson 2005) have shown that the same cognitive frame can lead to the consequences of different behaviors based on interpretations of concrete situation implications. (Beckert, 2010, p. 610). The effects of hashtags have different consequences, both to strengthen institutions and social networks and to weaken them.

**Figure 5.** Hashtag network #Pindul




Source: Authors' research

This bridge hashtag matter for getting attention. This table show how most hashtags are general to get attention:

**Table 2.** Hashtag and Attention

| Hashtag | Sum of likes | Sum of comments |
|---|---|---|
| #goapindul #pindulcave #pindul #pesonajogja #wisatagoapindul #pindulcave #gunungkidul #exploregunungkidul #pesonajogja #jogjaistimewa #jalanjalanjogja #pesonagoa #pesonaindonesia #jogjaistimewa #piknik #piknikjogja #likeforlikes #likeforfollow #LfL #pho | 2882 | 52 |
| #sleman #jogja #jogjavidgram #sleman #bantul #sedayu #malang #solo#klaten#bekongang#tulungagung#kendal#tegal#wonosari #kalasan#prambanan#tegal#jepara#semarang#magelang #wonosarii#pindul#baron#parangtritis#akustikvidgram_#timkandas#sadboy. | 398 | 36 |
| .#goapindul #wisatagoapindul #goapinduljogja #goapindulmantap #pindulcave #pindul #pesonajogja #jogjaistimewa #tempatpiknik #tempatwisatajogja #cavetubing #jalanjalanjogja #wonosari #wisatagunungkidul #wisatajogja #jogjavacation #jogja #tripjogja #explo | 251 | 5 |
| #goapindul #wisatagoapindul #goapinduljogja #goapindulmantap #pindulcave #pindul #pesonajogja #jogjaistimewa #tempatpiknik #tempatwisatajogja #cavetubing #jalanjalanjogja #wonosari #wisatagunungkidul #wisatajogja #jogjavacation #jogja #tripjogja #explor | 181 | 3 |
| #liburan #wonderfulindonesia #trip #wonderfulindonesia #trip #tripmurah #holiday #wisata #pindul #pindulcave #goapindul #rivertubing #pantaitimang #timangbeach #timang #adventure #traveling #travelingindonesia #travelinggram #traveladdict #travelerindo | 172 | 0 |

Source: Authors' research

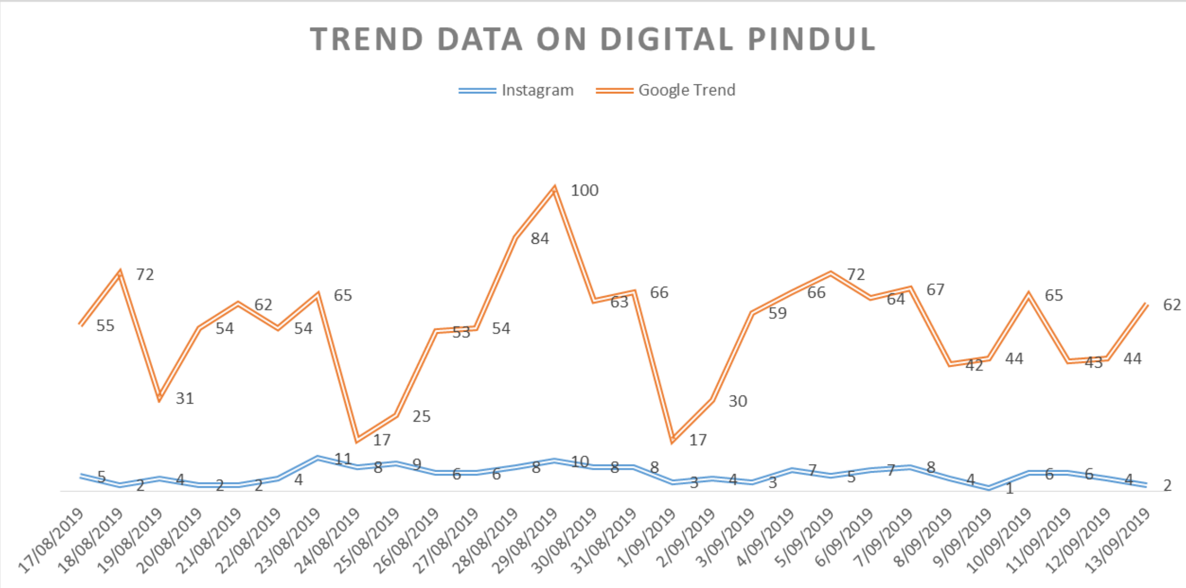
The first hashtag, "Goa Pindul", appeared on Twitter 23 Juni 2011 (by Roseli Handayani), and "Pindul cave" 11 November 2011 meanwhile "Gua Pindul' 17 Oktober 2012. It means that the popularity of Pindul cave was started in 2011 and got multiplier from the subsequent years. Following the analysis, hashtag had a role to move (digitally mediated) social order of market through rating culture that established by different actors to what Beckert called as "public order of market" means the order only exists when everyone (internet users, social media users, travelers, academia, and others) shape broader issues on a phenomenon (in this article refers to Goa Pindul) extended from accident, personal experience, review, and other issues.

*Social and Public Order of Market*

In previous discussions, we showed how Google search became the tool for social actors to perform, participate and shapes topics around Pindul cave topics. Google search also drived social actors to attract with digital logics i.e. ranking culture, for example, reviews and rating for travel agencies, government, and industries to cover their activities by top digital media, and academia to show their research article in Google to increase citation. Instagram used for marketing travel agencies and tourism experiences. Instagram extended with hashtags to make wider audiences with different purposes.

The authors will compare the trend of how internet users search in Google and produce content on Instagram. This graph below examines how digital culture maybe link to shape digitally mediated tourism.

**Figure 6.** Trending google search




Source: Authors' research

Based on this graph, we can see from 23rd to 30th of August, Pindul cave became trending in both Google Search and Instagram. It seems that internet users may be searching for information during travel and produce content on Instagram.

The results of the graph explained the existence of a form of tendency. During the week-days, users looked for information on Pindul attractions in the google search. Search results related to information on the location such as an address, location situation, and condition, attractiveness of beauty, price of admission, guide services, hotel accommodation, and other information, as reference information was very meaningful for users. When the weekend arrived, users already had choices and information about Pindul attractions.

During the weekend period, not many users were looking for information related to Pindul. The rising trend on Instagram showed the enthusiasm of Pindul visitors who uploaded their photos while they were at the attraction. Comments emerged and responded to each other in the photo. Sharing and uploading their photos were very meaningful to shape the cognitive of other users. The emergence of hashtag related to Pindul can be explained as cognitive frames formed unconsciously between them. Furthermore, the popularity of Pindul formed on social media influenced the institutional structure. The government and management were trying to raise more attention to these attractions than ever before. They made new rules and policies responding to comments and discussions by netizens although it did not anticipate an explosion in the number of visitors.

Likewise, opinions created from a cognitive framework encourage many users to engage in promoting the beauty of Pindul Cave, both consciously and unconsciously. Very easy internet access encourages various networks to stimulate the growth of many actors involved. Inter-relations between the three social structures were closely related. When changes happened in one structure it had an impact on others. Inter-relationship relations took place continuously. That relationship reproduces and reproduces itself. This condition forms a social and public order of the market by itself.

## Conclusions

Social media gave people in Indonesia an encouragement to travel and visit tourism objects more than before particularly in Yogyakarta tour destinations. Pindul cave became one of the favorite tourist destinations in a relatively short time in this province due to the onslaught of information from social media that could be said to be a form of promotion created its popularity amazingly. Most visitors visited Pindul cave attraction got the information through attractive pictures and reviews on social media.

This phenomenon is what Castell calls as a form of social network based on information technology, or often said to be the digital era. And, this network concept can enable "the social order of market" concept from Jens Beckert who hasn't had a chance to think about it. Social media had a vast information network and it could not even have been imagined before. In fact, the vastness of the network caused the publication of Pindul Cave to be high and was able to change the mindset of the community, causing a great impetus for the public to visit it. Problems arouse and could be frightening when the institution concerned was not ready to anticipate the explosion of visitors. Besides giving a very good impact, on the other hand, social media had dramatically caused operators to be distraught in providing services, especially when there was a tremendous surge of visitors.

## Implications

This research proves that the interrelations of social networks, institutions, and cognitive frames from Beckert are very important in managing an economic field, especially in handling tourism. However, this study adds that the most influential social network at the moment is social media rather than conventional ones. This matter has not been discussed by Beckert but implicitly predicted by Castell. It builds cognitive frames of people to visit and needs the experience to enjoy the attraction in Pindul cave. The excitement of social networks that build a particular cognitive frame will have a very significant impact on related institutions. Therefore, the local government responsible for tourism should build an institution that is well organized and do not leave the market field to the existing market mechanism.

Thus, similar studies are needed that look at changes in people's behavior related to their activities in social media and implications for managing an economic activity. Because of no steady methodology in discussing the role of social media in explaining increasingly dynamic community behavior, especially in the field of tourism, research based on big data by recording digital footprints needs to be developed more seriously.

## Contribution to the field

This study is very useful for tourism managers, the tourism industry and the government as anticipating and handling tourism in the huge changing environment of the digital era. This research also provides useful case examples of how social media can influence people's behavior and the importance of strong institutions in monitoring people's tendencies to act in the mass media. Besides providing valuable contributions to tourism practitioners, the results of this research are also useful in developing theories of communication science, economic sociology, and management. Furthermore, this research contributes to the methodology for using big data that is still not well established.

**Acknowledge**

Thank you to the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the International Office of the Universitas Indonesia and various parties who have supported the research and ITCD conference in Dubrovnik.

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# THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HR DEPARTMENT IN A CRUISE SHIP COMPANY: DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

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***ABSTRACT***

*Background and goals: Cruise companies should orchestrate the personnel logistics meticulously, taking into account that they require to have a high volume of personnel travelling from one location to another on a regular basis for work. The purpose of this study is to offer an overview of the organization of HR departments, analyzing the challenges they face throughout the Pullmantur case study. This paper describes and examines the different positions, functions, and responsibilities of HR "on ship and shore."*

*Methodology: Primary data for this study derive from a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key HR positions, both on ship and shore.*

*Results: One of the particularities in the organization of the HR function on a cruise ship is the planning of HR and assignment of personnel. The challenges faced by the management of HR on a cruise ship are higher and different from those of an HR department of other types of companies. The process of assigning crews to operate a cruise ship is a strategic and complex one, not only in terms of logistic but also for the involvement of the HR department. In terms of the duties and responsibilities of the Human Resources teams, some share similar posts in other companies. Nevertheless, there are special functions on a cruise ship that, although being similar, onboard are endowed with greater importance.*

*Conclusion: The organization and management of HR onboard contain more stress and complexity, but at the same time, it is richer and more challenging than in any other field.*

***Keywords:*** *Cruise industry, Human Resources, Shipboard HR Manager, Organization, Work conditions.*

## Introduction and literature review

Cruise companies should orchestrate the "personnel logistics meticulously", considering that they require a high volume of personnel travelling from one location to another on a regular basis for work. However, the hierarchical and organizational structure of the cruise industry has its own particularities that affect the management of its personnel (Schlingemann, 2015; Vukonic, Bielic & Russo, 2016; Dennet, 2018).

Besides that, cruise ship employees have special working conditions (Bolt & Lashley, 2015): short contracts, specific training and they spend long periods in restricted spaces (Brownell, 2008; Raub & Streit, 2006) along with demanding schedules with long working hours (Wolff, Larsen, Marnburg & Øgaard, 2013). In addition, literature has pointed out: the difficulty in recruiting candidates (Gibson & Swift, 2011; Millar, 2010; Raub & Streit, 2006) and getting engagement (Radic, 2017); the diversity of the crew (Brownell, 2008); the work environment and its influence on job satisfaction and motivation (Gibson & Perkins, 2015; Larsen, Marnburg, & Ogaard, 2012; Radic, 2017; Sehkaran & Sevcikova, 2011); and the well-being of cruise ship labour (Dennet, 2018).

In relation with working conditions, on the one side "Flags of convenience" provide shipowners with possibilities that drastically reduce taxation, labour, and environmental regulations, while eliminating crew restrictions (Terry, 2011). This situation allows shipowners to access highly globalized and flexible labour markets (Chin, 2008). On the other side, the Maritime Labour Convention (2006), that came into force in 2013, inaugurated a new era of decent work for seafarers and fair competition for shipowners in the global shipping industry. This regulation might serve to limit bad practices that have become common to the flags of convenience system (Schlingemann, 2015).

Although there is a great interest in the subject by academics and practitioners, aspects related to the organization and challenges of HR in the cruise industry are under-researched (Schlingemann, 2015).

The main aim of this paper is to offer an overview of the cruise industries' HR organization, analyzing the main challenges in the case of Pullmantur. The study analyzes the configuration, main particularities, and challenges of the HR function at a cruise company.

The paper is organized as follows: first, data collection and research method are offered. Then, the focus is on the case of Pullmantur: a brief history, functions, responsibilities, and duties of the key actors in HR "on land and sea." The following section describes the entry and evolution of Pullmantur's personnel. Finally, we expose the main findings, and the last section summarizes the main challenges of HRM at Pullmantur, offering conclusions and some limitations of the study.

## Methodology and research questions

The evidence stems from a detailed case study of a Spanish cruise company, Pullmantur. The qualitative case study (QCS) approach is used, as it allows a holistic understanding of a phenomenon within real-life contexts from the perspective of those involved (Boblin et al. 2013; Noor, 2008), in this case, the key players of HR at Pullmantur. The analysis of Pullmantur case allows an in-depth exploration of how the HR function works in the cruise industry.

Through the study of the Pullmantur case, this paper seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. How the HR function is practically organized "onshore and ship" and how are organized the assignments of the crew?
2. What are the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the shipboard HR

positions, and what are their main challenges?

We conducted nine interviews, four of them with HR managers at the company's HQ in Madrid, four with onboard HR Managers and one with the recruiting manager of Royal Caribbean. The interviews carried out with professionals working on ship and shore give us the possibility to explore the global operation of the HR function.

The interviews were semi-structured, ensuring that themes were pursued with a degree of consistency, but also allowing new issues to emerge during the fieldwork. These data were supplemented with the analysis of public reports, articles and documents, policies and procedures and corporate reports.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic coding (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) facilitated by the software Atlas ti version 11.0.

**Table 1.** Profile of HR personnel interviewed

| Position | Place | Length in Pullmantur-Royal Caribbean | Nationality | Interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corporate HR Director | Land | Almost 4 years | Spain | 1 |
| Senior fleet HR Manager | Land | Six years | Spain | 1 |
| Fleet HR manager | Land/sea | Twelve years | Spain | 2 |
| Shipboard HR Manager (vessel 1) | Sea | Three years | Czech Republic | 1 |
| Shipboard HR Manager (vessel 2) | Sea | One year | United Kingdom | 1 |
| Shipboard HR Manager (vessel 3) | Sea | Six years | Mexico | 1 |
| Shipboard HR Manager (vessel 4) | Sea | Six months | Nicaragua | 1 |
| Recruiting Manager, Bulk & Hiring Partners Shipboard, RCL | Land | One year | Italy | 1 |

Source: Authors' research

*Pullmantur Company*

Pullmantur is a Spanish cruise line made up of more than 3.000 employees working on ship and shore, while most of them work on board (Table 2). It was founded in 1971 as a travel agency and tour operator, and the company established its own cruise line, operating cruises from Barcelona since 2001. Currently, it is the leading company in the Spanish cruise market and Latin America's favourite cruise line, with a fleet of four vessels: Monarch, Sovereign, Zenith and Horizon covering the following itineraries: the Mediterranean, Caribbean and Arabian Seas, as well as seas in northern Europe and the Atlantic Ocean.

Since November 2006, it belongs to Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., one of the largest cruise lines in the world that comprises six distinctive companies with 60 ships: Royal Caribbean International; Celebrity Cruises; Silversea Cruises; 50% joint venture owner of TUI Cruises; 49% shareholder in the Spanish brand Pullmantur cruceros, and Amazara Club Cruises. Royal Caribbean Cruises ltd. employs 65000 people from over 120 countries.

In 2016, 51% of the company passes to Springwater Capital, while the ownership of the vessels remained at RCL. It is the only company with Spanish lifestyle on board, that is a niche in the current cruise market.

**Table 2.** Passenger/crew ratio at Pullmantur vessels

| Pullmantur vessels | Passenger capacity | Crew | Passenger/crew ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| Horizon | 1828 | 620 | 3:1 |
| Sovereign | 2733 | 820 | 3:1 |
| Monarch | 2333 | 803 | 3:1 |
| Zenith | 1828 | 620 | 3:1 |

Source: Authors' research

*Labour Regulations applying to Pullmantur*

Every cruise ship should choose a country or flag state to operate. To decide what country to choose, companies consider the more favourable regulations in different aspects, such as low tax rates or flexible labour laws (Lillie, 2004). The flag of convenience system allows ownerships to flag the vessels in countries with more beneficial regulatory systems.

Pullmantur has registered its four vessels in La Valleta, Malta, because the regulations in this country are beneficial to staff with a most advantageous crew mix. To remain competitive, taking advantages of flexible and favourable labour conditions, the company that hires the crew is a Bahamian company called "Pullmantur Ship Management."

In addition to the "flag of convenience", Pullmantur must accomplish the "Maritime Labour Convention" (MLC, 2006) and it is attached to the International Transport worker's federation (ITF) that offers improved conditions concerning the MLC. MLC contains different articles related to the protection of the rights of seafarers, such as minimum requirements to work on the ship; conditions of employment, etc.

*The organization and HR function at Pullmantur*

At Pullmantur there are two types of HR professionals: 1) Shore HR team and 2) Shipboard HR team. The shore staff HR function is very similar to other industries and is composed of the following positions: Corporate HR director; Manager of training, development and recruiting; Manager of employee relations and benefits; Senior HR specialist; Junior HR specialist and Manager of internal communication.

Pullmantur's shipboard HR team is composed of an HR Manager; a Crew administrator and an HR Assistant (see Figure 1). All of them have an essential role in the integration, guidance, and support of the crew´s life onboard. In addition, in response to a great number of crew movements necessary in a brief period, RCL has a team in charge of talent acquisition that is a point of contact for the hiring partner network in different regions.

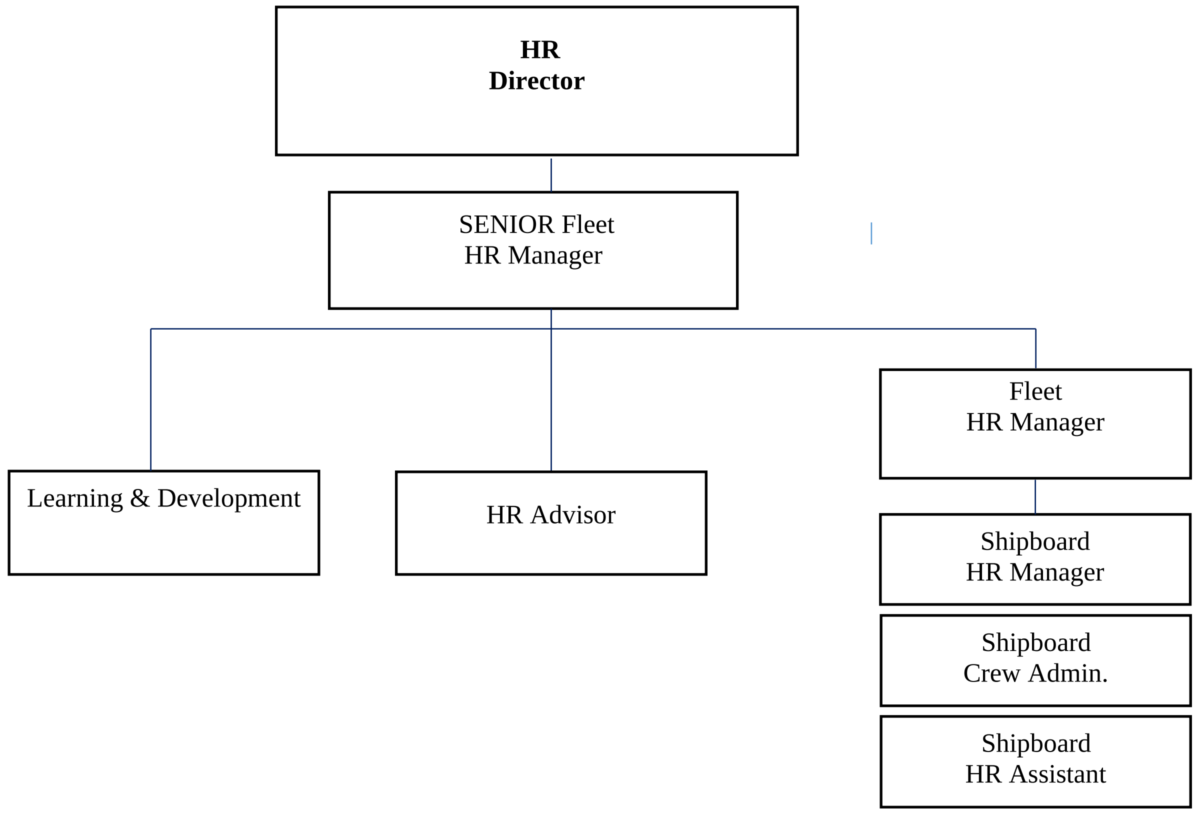
Until 2015, the HR department at Pullmantur was focused, almost exclusively, on administrative functions. HR was only considered a necessary, although important administrative function whose role was to keep the organization running correctly, preparing paperwork and visas for embarkation, contracting the necessary crew and employees properly on shore, etc. From 2015 on, HR started to be considered as an essential function to get business results. Pullmantur creates the HR corporate Manager onshore and HR specialists on each vessel. With the arrival of the Shipboard HR Manager, Pullmantur starts a new era in HRM.

The Fleet HR Manager, an itinerant position between shore and ship, coordinates the Pullmantur HR shipboard team. This position is responsible for the HR teams of the four Pullmantur vessels.

It is necessary to have an HR department on a cruise ship for several reasons. First, since the approval of the MLC, cruise line companies are forced to have this position in each ship to comply with some employee's rights rules. Furthermore, cruise employees are numerous and diverse. At Pullmantur, the minimum crew on a vessel is around six hundred (see Table 1), so that sufficient personnel can only be assured by recruiting crewmembers from different countries. This fact implies people working on the same vessel with different cultures and languages, so diversity should be well managed.

The second reason has to do with the place and time in which crewmembers develop their work. There is no distinction between public and private space for employees on cruise ships (Sechkaran & Sevcikova, 2011). The cruise ship is a "total institution" (Bolt & Lasley, 2015), where employees must be "on" nearly twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, where work time and time off is spent with the same people and in the same place (Dennet, 2018), which means potential conflicts arise. Conflict resolution is one of the core functions of a Shipboard HR Manager.

**Figure 1.** Shipboard HR organizational chart at Pullmantur group




Source: Authors' research

*The Shipboard HR manager: duties and responsibilities*

The shipboard HR managers at Pullmantur manage the ship's HR department, work closely with the captain and are members of the vessel's executive committee. They are the ship's compliance and ethics officers. Their work with the leadership team is crucial to develop and implement HR strategies, policies, and procedures in line with the individual business units and organizational mission and vision.

They are in charge of facilitating employee relations, engagement, professional development through training opportunities, and career advancement.

Key responsibilities of the HR Manager include: facilitating a culture of commitment to the company's values, standards, operating philosophies and overall business strategy; serve as a strategic partner to the shipboard leadership by providing HR direction and guidance on all employee-related issues; promote organizational effectiveness by implementing and monitoring issues relating to positive employee relations; monitor the company's performance management system; develop strategies to enhance overall employee satisfaction; oversee activities relating to sign on and sign off procedures, crew travel, cruise privileges and all other issues related to crew welfare; provide direction and guidance to the Training & Development Manager to ensure ongoing leadership development; support the staff Captain in all investigations involving crew; and, last but not least, support and educate the management on the company's progressive disciplinary procedure.

*The Shipboard crew administrator and Shipboard HR assistant: duties and responsibilities*

The Shipboard crew administration at Pullmantur is responsible for managing all aspects of seagoing personnel administration, ensuring the control of documents and certificates of embarking personnel. They are responsible for the day-to-day management of crew administration and crew office and for coordinating the crew administration tasks as they relate to the sign-on and sign-off processing, clearance, documentation, travel, terminations, and resignations, as well as to provide support to the HR Manager in all areas related to crew administration.

This position is responsible for the entire welcoming (sign-on) and farewell (sign-off) processes in which any crew, direct Pullmantur employee or Concessionaire (revenue partner) is involved. In addition, they are responsible for the well-being and comfort of the crewmembers prior, during, and after both procedures have been completed. This includes proper documentation preparation and/or request of tickets, travelling visas, hotel accommodation, equally if it is a normal and scheduled process or if it is based on an emergency, compassionate, maternity, or medical leave.

Moreover, this position is responsible for indirect cost containment through the proper use, handling, and maintenance of records, reports, documents, and equipment. The crew administrator shall understand the safety and quality management program, including responsibilities in safety organization.

They shall work with supervisors and subordinates to understand and comply with the company's environmental policies. Regarding the security matters, they shall cooperate with the Staff Captain and Chief Security Officer on the onboard compliance and application of the Company's Rules and Regulations.

They work closely with the Shipboard HR assistant, who is responsible for managing HR department administrative tasks and induction process support for new employees.

*The learning & development consultant*

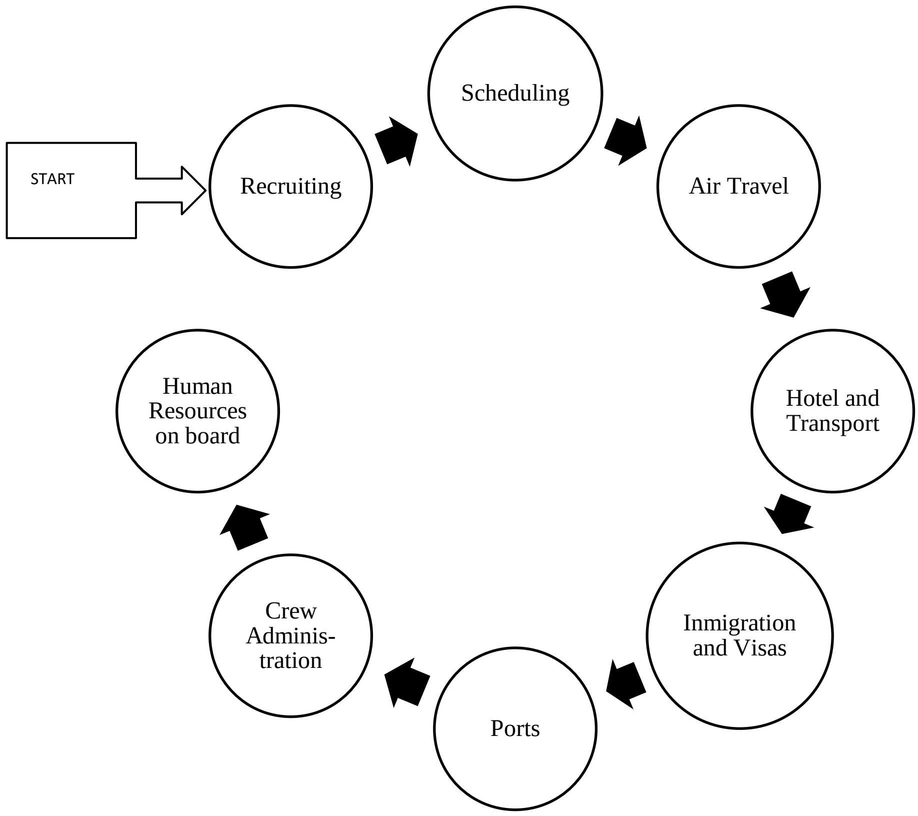
This position is crucial in terms of the improvement of organizational performance, development of the career and customer satisfaction. They aim to improve group and individual performance by training and implementing development programs. This position is responsible for influencing the career and professional development of the crewmembers and facilitates vessel development plans with onboard leadership to improve productivity and growth.

They work with land-based learning and organizational development department, Regional HR managers, ship executive committee members, divisional leaders, and land-based talent acquisition.

*The entry and evolution of the crew in Pullmantur*

Due to the nature of the business, there is a particular way to organize the HR function at Pullmantur. One of the particularities is the planning of HR and assignment of personnel. It is what Pullmantur call the "crew cycle life" (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Pullmantur's Crew Cycle Life




Source: Authors' research

The starting point of the "crew cycle life" is the recruiting process, responsibility of Royal Caribbean, that works with a network of hiring partners.

Once recruiting is completed, they assign candidates to the cruise ships. The ship the candidate joins depends on Pullmantur's needs, what is called scheduling. Scheduling oversees updating all crewmembers' movement in the personnel system or giving future assignments to all returning crewmembers. Coordination is crucial, considering the significant number of crewmembers involved. Candidates receive a Letter of Employment (LOE), provided by Pullmantur Cruises, that states the date they are scheduled to board the vessel they are joining and the position for which they have been hired. They must always have this document available while travelling toward the ship.

At Pullmantur, the contract length ranges from four to eight months, depending on the position. Managers typically have four-month assignments and service personnel six. For all other positions, the rule is eight months working onboard. Once contracts finish, there is rest with no salary for two months before the possibility of a new rehire. The decision of rehiring employees depends on whether the performance evaluation was good.

Requirements for new cruise ship employees before embarking include passport; Schengen visa; the LOE (letter of Employment); medical documents; as well as licenses and training certificates. In this regard, they have to get a special course to equip them with all the tools necessaries for a career at sea. There are two types of training courses: the first one is basic, and the candidate gets the certificate of specialization in Basic Training in Maritime Protection, according to the International Convention STCW-2010 (Standards, Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers). Other courses for managers are "crowd management" and "crisis management".

Following the cycle, Pullmantur has another department called air travel, which is in charge of crewmembers' travelling from their place of origin to the ports where the cruise departs. There is also a department in charge of hotel and transport, which is organizing the night before the cruise ship's departure in case crewmembers arrive earlier.

Immigration and Visas department facilitates all papers related to Passport, visas, etc. Ports are included in the crew's cycle because there are people who are responsible for giving information about the characteristics of the port to the crewmembers.

As for the crew administrator, he reports to the HR Manager and is the first face that crewmembers see when they embark. He is at the office where they arrive and solve their doubts about the incorporation. He provides them with copies of their contracts and check that the crew has all the original papers required to work onboard.

**Findings**

At the operational level, the recruitment, selection, training, and incorporation system is more complicated than in other industries and includes different procedures. As we explained, this complexity is translated into what Pullmantur calls 'crew cycle life.'

As the fleet HR Manager declared in one of the interviews carried out:

*"The way in which is organized the entry and life in Company of the personnel is completely different in a cruise line than in any other business. We carry out what we call in Pullmantur 'the crew cycle life' to reflect every step that we have to do with the crew members of Pullmantur from the recruiting (…) It is important to take into account that in a tourism company, or in a hotel, tasks and responsibilities in HR, and, even the entry in the company, are more simple: you recruit and then the candidate signs a contract, starts working and that's it… in a cruise line is much more complicated. The crew cycle life reflects all this complexity."*

With regard to this organization, one of the main findings is the change that has occurred in the HR function since the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006). This regulation has introduced a drastic change in terms of employee working conditions. The complexity imposed by the compliance with this law, and the union demands that it entails, has led to the appearance of a new mandatory figure on board: the HR manager. As the Senior HR Fleet of Pullmantur assures:

*"The MLC began to be implemented in 2013 and has meant a considerable change in the industry. We must have all the certificates in order, and we have audits at least two times a year on each ship in which they ask for everything. The crewmembers have a direct channel of communication with MLC and with the union in which they can express any complaint. Besides, since the approval of MLC, it is mandatory to have an HR Manager onboard (...) HR Manager is responsible for compliance issues that can be audited at any time. If the audit detects any situation is not conforming to the MLC, it could stop the ship. They inspect that you comply with the MLC, for example, the size of the cabins where the crew lives, the hours of work and hours of rest ... "*

This fact has led us to deepen the interviews about this figure of the HR Manager, its functions and responsibilities, the way that he coordinates with "land" and its impact on the organization. We have found that the work of an HR professional on board is very different from that of other professionals in other sectors.

As one HR executive points out in an interview:

*"In any company, the HR Manager has a job with very organized functions and times, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and then they go home. On the ship, it is completely different, as you live with the crew. 80% of cases have nothing to do with labour problems. For example, HR is also responsible for the entertainment of the crew; that is, they also take care of and worry about the hours outside of work ..."*

It is not just a problem of schedules; the cases on board are as complex as varied. Each day is different, as reflected in the following comment from an interviewed Shipboard HR Manager:

*"No day is the same; everything depends on what has been programmed, plus the unforeseen. Example a day like today (first day of navigation), Safety meeting from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., then, maintenance meeting from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., office hours for crew attention until 12:00hrs. From 12:00 a.m. until 1 p.m. meeting with the Executive Committee. 3 p.m., checking emails and follow up on pending cases, as well as attention to the crew until 7:00 p.m. Day of Navigation, Gala Night when we present ourselves to the passengers at 8:15 p.m. and 10:15 p.m. In between, an incident of crewmember occurred, so you have to inform security and proceed with the corresponding investigation. A day of work is formed by meetings, crew attention, review of emails, case tracking, investigations and reports to do."*

All this is producing a high level of specialization in this position since it entails broader and different responsibilities compared to traditional HR manager in the hotel sector. The variety of problems faced by the HR teams on board every day about workplace conditions, the characteristics of work onboard and the difficulty in solving those problems, is what marks the difference between the management of HR of a cruise company and companies in other sectors.

*"The shipboard HR Manager is a key figure and very different from the HR manager of other businesses. He belongs to the steering committee, depends on the on-land direction of HR as well as to the ship's captain, but the latter is curious. Because he depends on the captain but at the same time, "controls" the captain. The HR Manager reports to the ground crew of any anomaly or violation of the regulations and procedures, even if the captain has not complied with it."*

The most critical responsibility of the HR manager on board is an ethical issue. The Shipboard HR Manager is the person in charge of all ethics/harassment investigations onboard, or as Pullmantur puts it, "the ship's Compliance and Ethics Officer onboard." Together with the ship's captain, he decides disciplinary measures. He is not only responsible for HR management, but also the psychological support person who faces professional and ethical problems, as well as those of critical coexistence between the crew. During the interviews, this fact is mentioned on many occasions in different ways and is reflected in different documents that have been analyzed to write this paper.

As regarding the different practices of HR, both recruitment and selection, as well as training and evaluation, are well organized. However, there are aspects related to the retention and the development of the professional career that will represent an essential challenge in the coming years, considering the growth of the cruise industry. When asked about the main challenge for the HR function in the near future, the land HR director pointed out:

*"Without any doubt, my main challenge is the development of a professional career. There must be people on board prepared and certified to take over other positions. This must be achieved for the efficiency of HR and to motivate the best. If there is a possible career, there is more chance that they will continue with us".*

Customer satisfaction depends to a remarkable extent on employee satisfaction. In recent years, Pullmantur has carried out strategic actions in this regard. An example of this is the Excellence awards for the best crew; the *"Grow with Pullmantur"* program to encourage the internal promotion or the measurement of the crew's satisfaction. Nevertheless, at the moment, HRM and its alignment with the business strategy is in the embryonic phase and continues to represent one of the main challenges in this area.

One of the common characteristics of all cruise companies is multiculturalism. In Pullmantur, at least 35 nationalities are gathered on a ship. According to the conducted interviews with the HR Managers, managing diversity is a challenge almost daily due to the mixture of races and cultures on board: *"we have to be able to empathize with all nationalities and adequately communicate with each one of them"*. The difficulty with diversity appears clearly during literature reviewing and in almost all written documents reviewed for this paper.

**Conclusions**

The challenges faced by the management of HR in a cruise ship are greater and different from those of the HR department of another type of companies. They share some complex challenges in HR, such as managing diversity or becoming a strategic partner in management. However, they have specific challenges of a floating company.

In any company, managing diversity with so many nationalities would be a challenge in itself, but onboard the challenge is even greater considering the close relationship between crewmembers who live and work in the same place.

Despite many recent improvements, the HR shipboard team has not the same working conditions than HR on land, so the merit of performing well HR commitment is more exceptional on the ship than onshore.

In HR, no two days are the same onboard, and this might be the biggest challenge of HR professionals in cruise ship companies. They should make very different and challenging decisions always considering the fundamental criteria of wellbeing and safety of crew and passengers.

Our study highlights some significant findings: despite literature since the late nineties stated the importance of the strategic function of HR, cruise lines have ignored this until they were forced to apply the Maritime Labour Convention. Until 2015, they did not have a shipboard HR Manager, and they only focused on administrative tasks of HR. It would be necessary more research in this aspect to know if this situation is common to the rest of cruise brands.

In terms of duties and responsibilities of the HR teams, some share similar posts in other companies. Nevertheless, there are special functions on cruise ships and others that, although they are similar, onboard are endowed with higher importance. The most notable one is the weight that the Shipboard HR Manager has on the responsibility of the crew during and after working hours, including disciplinary and ethical aspects as well as conflict management. The conclusion is that the management of HR onboard contains more stress and complexity, but at the same time, it is more productive and more challenging than in any other field.

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# CHALENGES OF DESTINATION TRANSFOMATION AND OVERTOURISM CONFLICTS

# THE OTHER SIDE OF TOURISM: CONTRADICTIONS OF TOURISM AND SOCIO-TERRITORIAL CONFLICTS IN THE TOURIST DESTINATION OF THE YUCATÁN PENINSULA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Nowadays, tourism represents one of the fastest growing sectors worldwide, it is affirmed as a decisive phenomenon for the economic development. The contribution of tourism to the world economy in 2017 was 10.4%, and 20% of all jobs created in the last ten years, are in the travel and tourism sector (WTTC, 2018). Tourism, therefore, plays a decisive role in the sociocultural development and protection of environmental resources, also in urban growth and territorial occupation models. The document follows the steps of an investigation carried out in 2018 in the southeast of Mexico, in which special attention was paid to the impacts that the global tourism industry, increasingly driven by purely mercenary aims, is having in some areas of inestimable cultural and environmental value like the Yucatan peninsula. This research analyses, in particular, the paradigm "what tourists do not see, local societies live" with the intention of highlighting aspects not directly perceptible, but closely related to the intensification of the tourist phenomenon and the lack of attention in the management of resources. The purpose is to draw attention to the importance of "travel" as a sustainable and responsible practice, which considers, with a critical and active approach, the tourist contexts, respecting resources, culture and the well-being of local communities. This document invites us to reflect, therefore, on really existing problems and conflicts, to understand the intrinsic contradictions of the tourist phenomenon, hence the process of "massification" as a direct consequence of the intensification of tourist flows. A theme that, within the broader debate on sustainability models, raises a series of critical issues related to tourism, which deserve to be analysed.*

***Keywords**: tourism; ethics; development; environmental resources; contradictions; conflicts.*

**Background and goals**

Today, tourism is one of the fastest growing global sectors and plays a decisive role in the economic development of countries.

According to World Travel and Tourism Council, Tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (319 million) worldwide and generating 10.4% of world GDP. In 2018, the Travel & Tourism industry experienced 3.9% growth, compared to the global economy (3.2%). One in five new jobs were created by the industry over the last five years (WTTC, 2018).

On the other hand, in the era of the so-called Anthropocene, Tourism as well faces unprecedented challenges. As an example, those linked to climate change and its impact on tourist destinations, or to the pressure of the tourism industry and tourists on the environment, landscapes, local cultures and resident populations.

According to Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (2001): «Tourism activities should be conducted in harmony with the attributes and traditions of the host regions and countries and in respect for their laws, practices and customs» (art. 1.2), but above all, «Tourism activity should be planned in such a way as to allow traditional cultural products, crafts and folklore to survive and flourish, rather than causing them to degenerate and become standardized» (art. 4.4).

In recent decades the Yucatán peninsula has undergone great transformations connected to an uncontrolled and unrestrained tourism development. Multinationals and financial capital more and more interfere with national organizations and policies, under the banner of increasingly globalized tourism generating cultural models and lifestyles that risk emptying these contexts of functions and typical activities, distorting traditions, culture, and local identities.

In this scenario, the study investigates the other side of tourism, in an attempt to highlight the aspects closely related to the intensification of the tourism phenomenon and the lack of attention to the management of resources, in particular, the paradigm "what tourists do not see, but local societies lives.

The goal is to draw attention to the importance of "journey" not simply as a "recreational and leisure activity", but as a sustainable and responsible practice that considers tourist destinations respecting resources, culture and well-being of local populations, in a critical and active way.

**Methodology**

The paper is the result of a study carried out in 2018 in south-eastern Mexico. In particular, the study focuses on to the impact that tourist global industry – increasingly driven by mere economic objectives – is producing in some priceless value cultural areas of the Yucatan peninsula.

The study was carried out on a theoretical and empirical plan. The methodology then follows a qualitative and quantitative approach.

The methodological part included several phases; the choice of the destination to be analysed, a theoretical phase that consisted in a careful examination of the literature, official documents, and a review of the main national and local newspapers.

Following a preparatory work for field research focusing on the problems that afflict the areas to be investigated and creating a map of the actors to be interviewed.

The field research phase was conducted starting from two different trips. The first had Laguna Chabela as its main destination, from which we then moved to others adjacent places; Pac Chen-Tres Reyes, Punta Laguna and Nueva Durango community. These places are all located on the main road that leads from Cancun to the famous archaeological site of Cobá. Here, in addition to personally verifying the conditions and the beauty of the places, we came into close contact with the main local players, who gave us exclusive testimonials[2].

During the second trip to the island of Holbox, the main intention was to verify first-hand the state of contamination of the island, after hiring an electric vehicle we went to the waste landfill and in others less touristy places, to verify the real condition[3].

Field research was carried out with all the researcher's practical interventions in a specific social environment and with goal of capturing the object of study, with observations, and obtaining real evidence from primary sources. The direct interactions coming from the observations and descriptions provided by the actors connected with the phenomenon, have allowed an effective and deep understanding of the reality of the tourist destinations under study. The data collected in the form of written notes, audio, photos and videos, have been reworked in the writing phase and in continuous comparison with newspapers and texts that address similar problems, this has led to the creation of a document that is easy to understand but with a profound sense, which reports without filters, the real situation of tourist destinations, in the same way as we also learned it.

**Case studies**

The great expansion of tourism on a global level has led many countries to strengthen development policies in line with changes in political economy and market models. The Yucatán Peninsula, with over 4 million tourists a year, is the most visited place in the Caribbean Sea (WTTC, 2018).

Starting from the city of Cancún, the increase in tourist demand has spread like wildfire throughout the peninsula, creating entire "touristy" areas such as the Riviera Maya[4], on the east coast, up to the regions of the hinterland. Currently, the three states that make up the Yucatan peninsula are among the main international tourist destinations. First, Quintana Roo receives about 1.7 million international tourists every year (Sedetur, 2017). In this perspective, several tourism projects are developing on the coast, in cities and in rural areas, and are gaining increasing importance in the orientation and planning of the economic strategies of the state.

This constitutes a complex scenario that leads to the study and interpretation of the conditions, dynamics of society and the tourism industry, in this sense takes a central role in understanding the relationships between local populations and mass tourism flows. The Yucatan offers an ever more integral image of its tourist potential translatable into sun and beaches, fun, nature and culture. All under the label of the "Maya World" object of the international request of

[2] In particular, in the first trip the actors interviewed were: some members of the Cahum Mayan family residing in Laguna Chabela (Interviews 1 and 2); in Nueva Durango a group of young German tourists and their two guides which were just arrived from a visit to the Mayan Village of Pac Chen (Interviews 3, 4 and 5); in Punta Laguna, we came into close contact with a local nature guide (Interview 6) that revealed us different background stories, in the same way, were interviewed a series of university biology students who they too were part of a research trip (Interview 7).

[3] Here, among the interviewed actors: a manager of a travel agency (Interview 8), that he has been organizing trips from several years on the island; in addition to him during our permanence different local people were interviewed (Interview 9).

[4] The Riviera Maya is a tourism and resort district south of Cancun, Mexico. It straddles the coastal Federal Highway 307, along the Caribbean coastline of the state of Quintana Roo, located in the eastern portion of the Yucatán Peninsula.

tourists who visit Mexico. However, these Mayan populations, now almost completely disappeared and always oppressed and despised, are now subjected to further pressure from the globalized tourism system which, instead of preserving its integrity, exploits its culture and the few remaining resources. In particular the following paper will analyze the problems affecting tourist destinations of Laguna Chabela, Pac Chen-Tres Reyes and Holbox island.

*Laguna Chabela: the "war" for the Mayan lands*

In the municipality of Lázaro Cárdenas, more precisely on the ejido[5] belongs to the municipality of Valladolid is located Laguna Chabela, 88 km from Cancún, a wet area at an average height of 25 meters above sea level, immersed in the tropical jungle of the Mayan Riviera, with a small swimming lagoon in the middle. This area is protected by Mayan families that preserve its natural integrity. At present only 8 men and 3 women live in 3 houses, without access to electricity and running water, where the only means of communication is a mobile phone. This community is a hidden beauty, mostly visited by scholars attracted by the nature of the place and the Mayan traditions. It was born with José Guadalupe Cahum Uc, who from the depths of the jungle about 20 km inland with respect to the lagoon, 25 years ago together with his wife and children, because they were too isolated from basic services such as health centres and schools, decided to move to the shores of this beautiful lagoon, where they found an ancient Mayan mound and a welcoming place to settle down. Don José Guadalupe decided to call this new community "Laguna Chabela" in honour of his favourite song "Ay Chabela", a curious fact that expresses all the happy and welcoming nature of its inhabitants. Don José Guadalupe chose this place for its abundance of water and the relief that favoured beekeeping and the Milpa[6]. Today the community is formed by the direct descendants of Don José Guadalupe and Dona Aurelia, and still today it supports itself with those traditional activities. In recent years the family has developed a community tourism project that, before being "slowed down", as well as being a means of livelihood, has allowed the family to make themselves known and share the message of the Mayan culture and the enigma of its beauty.

Antagonistically to the Cahum family, 15 other families invaded these territories claiming ownership, with the excuse of wanting to work the land and develop tourism projects, but the real intention was to take over portions of land and then resell it, not sharing the conservative vision of the Cahum family, but supporting the idea or better the order of the former state prosecutor Rafael Acosta Solis (Interviews 1 and 2).The former state prosecutor together with the Valladolid commissioner decided to parcel the ejido to sell it to entrepreneurs. The authority's intention is to deprive the Mayan families of their land in Laguna Chabela; and to accomplish it, oppressions, fines and even death threats were used. The authorities try to take over the place, due to the natural wealth that this represents and then exploit its economic benefit. Initially they proposed themselves with negotiation offers, but soon they fined the inhabitants with the exaggerated sum of 30 thousand pesos, a

[5] In the Mexican system of government, an ejido is an area of communal land used for agriculture, on which community members individually farm designated parcels and collectively maintain communal holdings. Ejidos are registered with Mexico's National Agrarian Registry (Registro Agrario Nacional). The system of ejidos was based on an understanding of the Aztec calpulli and the medieval Spanish ejido.

[6] Milpa is a crop-growing system used throughout Mesoamerica. It has been most extensively described in the Yucatán peninsula area of Mexico. The word milpa is derived from the Nahuatl word phrase mil-pa, which translates into "cultivated field".

ploy to try to mask the expropriation. While the other owners of the nearby concessions, started a campaign of false accusations against the family, with the intent to invade the properties and block their access. The harassment suffered by the families resulted in armed aggression, and this inevitably provoked real clashes for the territory. The magazine La Jornada reports «Guadalupe Cahum Uc and Elías Cahum, residents over 30 years in Laguna Chabela, were kidnapped, tied to a tree, beaten and tortured by farmers opposing groups with intent to sell their land to big businessmen. According to the victims, among the people who make up the oppression group there is the former deputy attorney general of the justice of the Yucatan, Rafael Acosta Solís, presumably involved in various processes of purchase and sale of ejidos in the state» (Boffil Gómez, 2016, p. 28).

**Figure 1.** Two images from "La Jornada magazine" (1st) and "Quequi magazine photo" (2nd)


*Source*: La Jornada magazine and Quequi magazine, 10 December 2016.

For this reason, the young people of the families were forced to leave their studies, which they had undertaken outside, to return to their land and defend it. The members of the Cahum family, and the nature guides of the nearby tourist resort of Punta Laguna, have confirmed the current situation, that is the land acquisition and sale processes, with the intention of parcelling the entire ejido to sell it to men of business with touristic purposes (Interviews 1, 2 and 6). The result of all this has created precisely these rivalries between ejidatarios[7], and the small family is in serious difficulty; in this regard it is worth mentioning the support provided by the organization Pronatura[8], which has made available two lawyers for their defence, one for to address the issue of parcelling of the ejido and another that deals with the defence of their settlement. However, the Cahum family is currently in a very uncertain situation. And institutions, there was a total lack of support, as well as a notification to pay a fine of thousands of pesos issued by the Federal Office for Environmental Protection. Only in the past electoral campaign season was the "support" given to carry out rural tourism projects (Proyecto Ecoturístico en Lázaro Cárdenas) which, however, were soon left halfway through when the campaign ended. Requests to complete this project have been ignored and the Ecotourism Project, promoted at the edge of the lagoon, has been abandoned. The government seems

[7] A member of one of the communal land ownership schemes (ejidos).

[8] Pronatura México is the largest Mexican environmental conservation group.

to be reproducing in this area a logic already used and seen in other tourist areas, with the aim of expropriating land from families; on the contrary, they should have had total support to develop and preserve the territory, through alternative and sustainable tourism projects.

Currently the family works only with a small travel agency and is constantly looking for others who can share their vision and commitment to protecting the environment. In this regard they did not want to indulge in working with a particular eco-tourism agency as this implied an exclusivity contract for 30 years, while their interest is to openly receive anyone who wants to live and learn customs and traditions of the Mayan culture (Interviews 1 and 2). This inevitably raises another problem, the presence in this protected natural area of a tourist agency, this is what is happening in the nearby Mayan community of Pac Chen-Tres Reyes.

*Pac Chen-Tres Reyes: the Mayan Jungle, local or global identity?*

Pac-Chen is a small community of Mayan origin, located in the fertile area of Tres Reyes in the municipality of Lázaro Cárdenas in the state of Quintana Roo.

Tres Reyes, nestled in the Mayan jungle, is a natural area with various cenotes[9], caves and lagoons. The close link with the nature and importance of caring for it is the most important and characteristic aspect of this community (Interview 7).

For several years, the community has started a planning phase with the aim of promoting the wonders of the place and a natural and traditional lifestyle.

Thus, in 2015 an eco-touristic agency, in line with the principles of the local community, entered with a proposal to promote tourism based essentially on three functional axes: respect, nature and culture, and with the promise that community members would remain the only "local administrators". The inhabitants of Pac Chen have thus signed a collaboration contract with the tour operator which has undertaken to bring an eco-sustainable and alternative tourism to these places.

An occasion considered unique and fundamental for the community of Pac-Chen, since the agency is a tourist enterprise with important numbers in terms of travel and packages sold. The tour operator offers tourists a profound experience in direct contact with the local culture. In fact, during the tour, tourists participate in purification rituals, Mayan culture ceremonies and other activities, such as visits to cenotes, kayaks and tirolesa descents (Interviews 3, 4 and 5).

The small community is promoted through a tourist package called "Mayan Jungle". In this context, the community was organized by forming a "cooperative", which operates for the agency. However, only 23 people are employed daily, based on weekly rotation shifts between family members, who receive a fee of 175 pesos (8 euros) each. For each tourist that the agency brings, 17 pesos are paid to the members of the community, while for the "rent" of the whole area and the use of cenotes and the lagoon, the enterprise pays 20,000 pesos per month which, distributed among all the families of the community correspond to about 400 pesos per nucleus (Interview 6).

The members of the community are obliged to carry out the activities only with the tourists that the same agency brings on site, since all the equipment is owned by the latter.

[9] Cenote is a natural pit, or sinkhole, resulting from the collapse of limestone bedrock that exposes groundwater underneath. Especially associated with the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, cenotes were sometimes used by the ancient Maya for sacrificial offerings.

Any other service offered to tourists traveling on their own account is considered by tour operator as a sort of competition, which would put their jobs at risk. Compared to the promotion, on the web page the place is mentioned as "Mayan Jungle" and almost never Pac-Chen as denomination.

All the tourist activities are therefore organized by the tour operator and almost all the inhabitants, who work there as employees, tend to reproduce their culture in a schematic and standardized way, through an almost theatrical reconstruction of the uses, customs and typical lifestyle. In this way a scenario is outlined that confronts us with what different authors have defined as "disneyzation", that is the social phenomenon that provides new ways to interpret geographical facts and processes (Kehoe, 1991).

The artificialization of relational components in tourism has a special inclination towards counterfeiting, even when new forms of tourism are presented as alternatives to standardized and stereotyped models.

This is a situation that clearly reveals a relationship of total dependence of the communities of Tres Reyes and Pac-Chen by the society and the process of distortion of the identity of the place that is being carried out to the detriment of the local populations. In this case the negative effects of this relationship between tourism and places can be summarized in two phenomena: «Standardization, on the one hand, understood as the reproduction of serial [places] generated by the tourism industry, lacking its own identity [...] precisely at a time when singularity is affirmed as the main strategy of differentiation of the destination; and the "spectacularization", on the other, consisting of the transformation of the previous [place] to make it presumably more attractive, in order to adjust to the expectations generated in the demand» (Santos-Pavón, 2016, p.177).

**Figure 2**. The purification ritual in Jungle Maya and the tour package logo of Jungle Maya Native Park


Source: Authors' photographs

*Holbox: Pueblo Mágico?*

In the extreme north of the state of Quintana Roo in the municipality of Lázaro Cárdenas lies Holbox, a small island 40 km long and only 2 km wide, with a population of 2500 inhabitants. The island is connected to the mainland by sandbanks. This destination attracts thousands of visitors especially for adventure tourism and for relax. Although the island is located on the outer border of the Caribbean, its crystal-clear blue beaches are considered, however, a Caribbean environment. To this, is added, unique naturalistic activities such as the possibility for visitors to swim beside whale shark.

On the island there are no paved roads or cars, the inhabitants and the tourists move on golf cars or a bicycle among sandy roads, while on the way it is possible to appreciate the murals painted on the houses by artists from all over the world. Holbox is famous for lobster fishing, present in abundance in the typical dishes of local restaurants.

Since 2012, the island of Holbox is trying to get the title of Pueblo Mágico[10], granted by the Ministry of Tourism of Mexico. The Pueblos Mágicos program created in 2001 helps to re-evaluate areas and groups of populations that have always been in the collective imagination of the nation, a Pueblo Mágico is a place that has symbolic characteristics, rich in legends, history, transcendental facts, and finally a fate of magic represented by what the place emanates.

All this represents a great opportunity for tourism development in addition to substantial funding, the Pueblos Mágicos Program, in 2017, received only 6.5 million Pesos in Quintana Roo (García, 2018). However, this island is involved in many controversies because, despite being an established tourist destination, the basic services offered to the population are very lacking. The reality is the risk of "collapse", the lack of basic services, as above all the management of solid waste puts the aquifers in serious danger (Interview 9). For this reason, the residents had already threatened to block access to the island by giving an ultimatum in 2017 and asking for an immediate solution, but since then the situation does not seem to have changed much.

In January 2018 a new request was made to include the island in the Pueblos Magicos program; this may seem absurd considering that the island could not withstand urban and tourist pressure, considering that in addition to the lack of adequate management of health problems, many other aspects are lacking, such as the lack of a civil protection organization, fire brigade and a health center more "equipped" because on the island there is only a doctor with his interns, operating from Monday to Friday (Interview 8).

On the island there is a clear contrast between tourist activity and the real conditions in which the locals live. The precariousness of the services exposes to the risk of dangerous infections, above all for those who permanently inhabit the island, due to the absence of a sewage system and drainage. The island's mayor has declared that the problem is not new, but that there is no way to solve it, because the 40 thousand pesos that Holbox receives from the municipality of Lázaro Cárdenas, for operational work, only serve to collect the waste; on the island, around 14 tons of garbage are produced every day, which once collected remain in a landfill, causing serious problems to the environment and the health of the inhabitants.

[10] Magic Town.

**Figure 3**. Waste situation in Holbox and a waste dump


Source: Authors' photographs

Observing the situation in Holbox, the impression is of a paradise in decline, the degradation of the island highlights the lack of civic sense and social irresponsibility, the inhabitants of the island of Holbox have long suffered from the precariousness of services and with the arrival of thousands of tourists every week this problem is becoming more and more dangerous. Although some people prefer not to see and focus more on the famous name Pueblo Magico.

On the island there are more than 50 hotels with 1063 rooms that host more than 1800 tourists who, like the locals, need basic services. It is inconceivable to think that the tourist activity has been placed above the real needs of the inhabitants, who, although they are mostly employed in this activity, have the right to a better quality of life. The wrong choices are bringing the island to a social and environmental criticality.

Before developing a tourist space, it is necessary to face the important aspects so that a balance can be found between people and the environment, in fact the collapse of small areas such as Holbox is not due to any natural phenomenon, but to its excessive exploitation, direct cause the rapid development of hotel projects and the lack of interest of the authorities and institutions.

A positive note is represented by the statements of the national commissioner of the Protected Natural Areas (Conanp), Alejandro del Mazo, who said that Conanp will not allow the development of tourism in Holbox for more than 1.5%, regardless of pressures and interests of hotel owners and businessmen. Another news dating October 2018 is that the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) announced the new conservation measures of the tourist island Holbox, in its new program for the Area of Protection of Flora and Fauna, among the new rules, PET containers, unicel and plastic bags cannot enter the destination.

## Conclusions

In many contexts and in different situations the environmental impact of tourist flows and tourist facilities has proved devastating, commercial relations in the tourism sector are often highly unbalanced and the encounter with cultural difference can be reduced to more or less forms of neo-colonialism (Del Bò, 2017).

These evidences about the negative aspects produced by the intensification of the tourist phenomenon on environments, cultures, societies, economies in the destination countries (De Masi, 2018), have led to the awareness that the development of tourism cannot be separated from precise limits and specific conditions within which tourist practices must be implemented.

Several documents such as the Charter for Sustainable Tourism (World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, 1995) or the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2001) underline how the development of tourism must be based on sustainability, be ecologically sustainable in the long term, economically viable, ethically and socially fair with respect to local communities.

The paper highlights that in recent decades tourism development of the Yucatan peninsula has followed a path not compliant with those principles of sustainability and responsibility that tourism must follow to. The study cases of Laguna Chabela and Pac Chen-Tres Reyes; the privatization of the beaches on the Mayan Riviera coast or the sewerage system collapse and the waste emergency on the Holbox island, as a result of an uncontrolled invasion of tourists, show only a part of the different problems to which the Yucatan tourist destinations have been subjected for a long time. The field research, through the direct observation of some aspects, has allowed to better understand the different sides of a controversial and complex reality.

A first series of conclusions on the development of tourism in the Yucatan peninsula leads us to deduce that an essential aspect of this community is its heterogeneity and its extreme vulnerability. There are obvious political, economic, and social differences. Because of its socio-environmental characteristics, we can easily deduce that an intense tourist activity and a massive influx of people can cause irreversible damage to the natural environment and to the quality of life of the inhabitants. What emerges in the analyzed cases are; territorial expropriation in Laguna Chabela to the detriment of resident Mayan families; soil and water contamination in Holbox as a result of over-tourism; the "spectacularisation" of Mayan culture and customs in Pac Chen in the form of "exploitation" and not exactly in line with the ethics tourism principles. However, tourism is always seen as something positive to which these communities look with great hope for the future. The cases studied and what emerges represent the other side of tourism, a series of dynamics that allow us to reflect on very delicate topics of discussion, in practice those dynamics invisible to tourists, which instead raise important reflections on future strategies that tourist destinations will have to rethink.

In this regard, our commitment is that starting from the results obtained to try to provide in a next step the necessary measures for solving the problems observed; measures not easy to implement considering the dynamics and the delicate socio-environmental balances of these tourist contexts, but for which a deep understanding was needed firstly, which in this document we wanted to share to open up a reflection on the concrete problems and conflicts, to understand the intrinsic contradictions of tourism, and therefore the process of "massification" as a direct consequence of the intensification of tourist flows. The problems are not perceived by the tourist, which does not pose the problem of a critical vision since it is led to live what beautiful and interesting these places offer. The aim of the research was precisely to gather as much information as possible through lived experience, and to capture reality, otherwise difficult to understand through an external and fleeting vision.

One of the reasons why the problems of tourism are not regulated is because not all the actors involved interact in harmony, therefore the development of the locality towards a sustainable perspective should take place with the constant confrontation between government, companies and above all local communities. Travel and tourism should be planned and if practiced with a vision and open mind, are an irreplaceable factor of self-education, mutual tolerance and learning of the legitimate differences between peoples, cultures, and their diversity. Everyone has a role to play in creating a responsible tourism, tourist, governments, business, and communities must do everything possible.

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# 20TH CENTURY CONCRETE HERITAGE: ECOSYSTEM SERVICES APPROACH FOR ITS VALUING AND TOURIST USE. APPLICATION IN THE ZARZUELA RACECOURSE

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***ABSTRACT***

*Concrete architecture is considered as cultural heritage, nevertheless the appreciation of this kind of monuments, which could seem "young" with respect to more ancient, is decaying, due to a combination of lack of knowledge related to its real value and to environmental aggressive conditions in which they are exposed. In this sense, the mission of INNOVACONCRETE project, supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020, is to intervene in technical aspects, combined with activities to promote and achieve social awareness and value creation linked to monuments and representative buildings. Considering tourism as one of the main drivers of culture, its influence will be considered as a tool for citizen awareness about a specific kind of heritage, often forgotten. The methodology applied is based on the Ecosystem Services approach. The "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services" (MAES) project, developed by the European Union, and the classification system, associated to "The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services" (CICES) have been taken as reference. This method has been applied in the Zarzuela Racecourse (Madrid, Spain), where the remarks from our study show a system composed of large and small units that supply services. The main functions would be associated with components and processes built by man (anthropic system).*

*The main objective of this study is to propose a new approach or model for the conservation and valuation of heritage, based on the visibility and quantification of its importance through the benefits it offers to human welfare and how this model can assess its tourism potential to through criteria based on its uses and services. Through the methodology applied, we have detected the need to improve the society's general perception about this kind of monuments to achieve its tourist enhancement. Through the complementarity of certain services, such as cultural and provisioning services, the diffusion of the building could be improved as an attractive tourist resource, raising awareness of its architectural, cultural and historical particulars and making known, from this new approach, the relevance of the cultural historical heritage of the twentieth century.*

***Keywords:*** *ecosystem services; concrete heritage; heritage; cultural tourism, zarzuela racecourse*

## Introduction

Since the 20th century, one of the most used materials for the construction of part of our current heritage is concrete, which in many cases is core to architectural expression. Due to its performances and ability to be modelled, but also for its infinite possibilities in terms of textures and colour, *concrete has stimulated architectural innovation and creativity* (Dehn et al., 2016).

Many countries consider concrete architecture as cultural heritage, nevertheless the appreciation of this kind of monuments, which could seem "young" with respect to more ancient, is decaying, due to a combination of lack of knowledge related to its real value and to environmental aggressive conditions in which they are exposed. The valuation of heritage, whether natural or cultural, is a challenge. The cultural heritage belongs to society, both in its original manifestation and in its contemporary contextualization (Martín, 2007). Human-made constructions, which have been identified by society as patrimonial assets, are worthy of being conserved. However, to conserve heritage entities without explicit recognition of their use (service) has no guarantee of continuity over time (Ballart Hernández & Juan i Tresserras, 2008).

At this point, the main goal of this paper is to consider concrete-based cultural heritage as an important part of an urban ecosystem and to analyse the benefits of its protection for the human welfare, enhancing its value for tourism. The ecosystem services approach, applied in this research, has achieved an important position among academics, conservationists, development agencies, policy makers and governments. This is due to its versatility as a theoretical framework, analytical tool, and instrument for management, political discourse, and awareness (Rojas & Pérez, 2013).

The term ecosystem service was used for the first time at the beginning of the 1980s by and Ehrlich in 1987 (Fisher et al., 2009; Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2010). These authors proposed that the natural functions of ecosystems could be appreciated as "services" which could be used by society. The use of the ecosystem services concept became widespread since the 21st century when some authors began to name it as the science of ecosystem services. Evidence of this effort took place between 2000 and 2005 with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UN, 2005).

This paper aims to go beyond the concept of heritage as an object-based, historical, and aesthetic treasure and develop a broader definition which includes geographical, physical-natural, social, and cultural scopes. This definition would also recognize the usage value considering that heritage symbolise as entities with which society identifies, and to which is attached a sense of belonging (Martini, 2002). What is sought for cultural heritage, is a new way of valuing both the original functions and its possible current and future urban functions, according to the characteristics and attributes. This re-valuing will evolve to a multidimensional perspective, blending the visual, the functional and the historical. Summarizing, this study intends to better recognize how cultural heritage contribute to human welfare and how this can be a useful tool for tourism develop.

In conclusion, we can say that knowing why heritage important is, would be easier to know how to value it and, hence, how to enhance it through the development of proposal based on tourist or cultural activities, social events and citizen awareness.

The Zarzuela racecourse was considered for the ecosystem services application. This building, in spite of its alleged low valuation by society, is one of the most distinctive concrete constructions of the 20th century in Spain, and it is an example where we can collect some functional and relevant aspects such as economic, social, cultural, aesthetic and architectural.

**Methodology**

The methodology applied is based on the Ecosystem Services approach. The "Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services" (MAES) project, developed by the European Union, and the classification system, associated to "The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services" (CICES) have been taken as reference.

Two steps were considered:

The buildings and heritage monuments considered relevant by organizations such as Icomos (International Council of Monuments and Sites) and Docomomo (International Foundation to Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement) have been categorized and classified. Monuments and buildings understood as anthropic systems providing services for human well-being.

Adaptation of ecosystems as natural systems, suppliers of services for human welfare. The system theory has been taken in consideration, where a system is understood as a set of elements that interact with each other through natural and anthropic functions and processes, interacting with their natural or anthropic environment.

To value or to quantify the services (indicators), it has been considered that there are replaceable and irreplaceable services. This justifies the application of this methodology to patrimonial buildings. In this way, with the application of certain indicators, it has been possible to evaluate to what extent a building or patrimonial monument provides a service or another.

According to the equivalence of CICES, the services are classified in:

- Cultural
- Regulation
- Provisioning
- Supporting

The services' classification is done from the point of view of the beneficiary, since it is about the benefits that can be obtained by the functions that are developed in a specific area. In this case and of the grounds of the present study, tourism is considered as a provider of cultural and provisioning services.

The method is developed in five different steps that are applied in the study case (Figure 1):

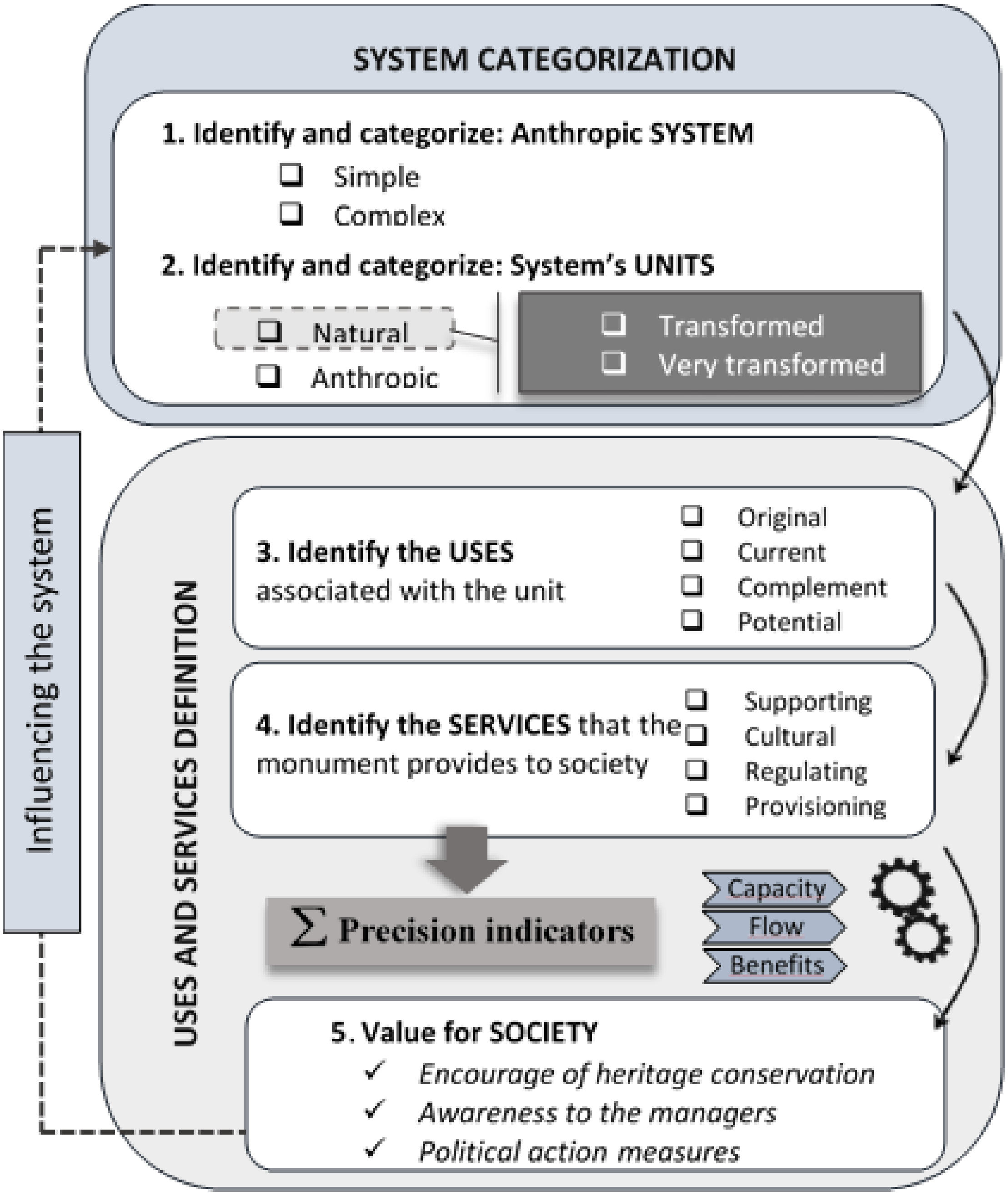
To distinguish between simple anthropic systems and complex anthropic systems. Complex systems are those that, in addition to providing the services for which they have been created, require a set of interrelated service provision units, which can be only anthropic units such as buildings or infrastructures or a combination of anthropogenic and natural units. In this sense, it will be essential to delimit the socio-ecological system.

To identify the units, and then, categorize each among the established categories. In this context, a first classification would relate to the origin of the components and processes that dominate the system. They would be classified as natural, mixed, or anthropic or natural, transformed or highly transformed (anthropized).

To identify the functions associated with these units or systems.

To identify the ecosystem services offered from the functions developed in the identified system.

**Figure 1.** Methodology for the services classification applied to heritage




Source: Arcila et al., 2019.

### Results and discussion

This method has been applied in a specific study case within the INNOVACONCRETE[11] project: The Zarzuela racecourse. This building is one of the most distinctive concrete constructions of the 20th century in Spain. It is located in the mount of "El Pardo" in Madrid, and it was carried out when the

[11] This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No 760858

architects Carlos Arniches, Martín Domínguez and the engineer Eduardo Torroja, a pioneer in the design of concrete shell structures. It was built in 1935, but it was interrupted during the Spanish Civil War in 1941 (Torre, 2015).

The racecourse was protected as *Bien de Interés*[12] *Cultural* as monument in 2009. In addition to listing the grandstands and other structures for protection, the citation refers to the paddock and *pelouse* as being of interest. It should be pointed that the racecourse develops its activity in lands owned by the Spanish public entity *Patrimonio Nacional* (National Heritage), taking part of the natural area "Monte de El Pardo". Hence, this territory has a great environmental value, being part of an important green corridor (Hipódromo de la Zarzuela, 2018). The territory where the socio-cultural activity linked to the racecourse takes place, occupies an area of 30.2 ha (301.957 m²), being around 27% of the total extension according to the *Sede Oficial del Catastro de España* (See Figure 2). This is considerate as a socio-ecosystem (See Figure 3) makes up of large and small units that supply different services (the racecourse, the circuit, the units and annexed buildings, such as parking, stables, etc.).

**Figure 2.** Cadastral polygon of Zarzuela racecourse

Source: Sede Oficial del Catastro de España, 2019.

**Figure 3.** Zarzuela racecourse socio-ecosystem


The consideration of the racecourse area as a single socio-ecosystem is due to the relationship that exists between the different units, as well as the services they provide to human welfare (man-made structures, buildings, and heritage infrastructures, etc.). Consequently, anthropic services are considered as those contributions from socio-systems to society.

[12] *Bien de Interés Cultural* is a category of heritage registered in Spain and in other Spanish speaker countries.

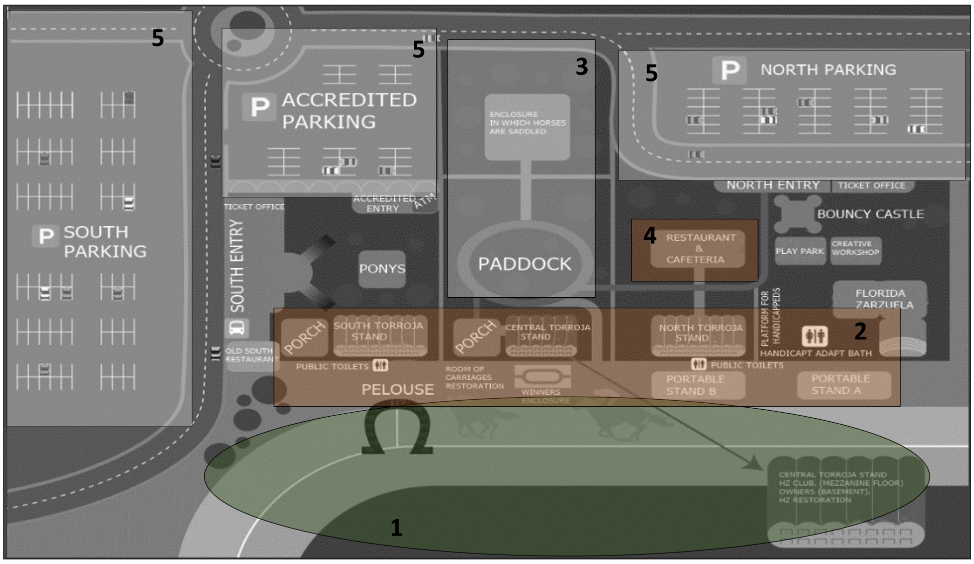
*Socio-ecosystem: main components*

The theory of socio-ecosystems is explained in depth by Ostrom (2009) who refers to these systems as a socio-ecological system, composed of their own subsystems with different components and ecological and social processes interacting with each other. Those components are understood as the systems' units being capable of supplying some kind of service and being taken advantage of by society for their benefit. This theory assumes that ecosystems are a combination of natural elements and processes, and in addition, anthropic ones (Azcárate & Fernández, 2017). Hence, the human dimension should be included within the definition of the socio-ecosystem.

The socio-ecosystem would be eminently anthropic, since the main functions would be associated with components and processes built by man for man. Although the racecourse is located in a territory with natural elements (herbaceous and arboreal vegetation), it is more appropriate to refer it as a highly transformed ecosystem. In this sense, some of the main units that are identified in the socio-ecosystem are the following: Tracks, Grandstands, Offices, Paddock, Restaurant and Parking (see Figure 4).

Following, the system units are classified as natural and anthropic. Within these categories, it is also necessary to specify the existence of natural elements in the anthropic units (e.g., the paddock), or the transformation of the natural units. The latter is the case of the tracks, which although they can be considered natural units that offer ecosystem services associated with the natural environment, are very transformed, since their presence and composition depends on the performance of man.

**Figure 4.** Units identified of the socio-ecologic system




Caption:

| Nº | Sites | Units |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tracks | Natural, very transformed |
| 2 | Grandstands | Anthropic |
| | Offices | Anthropic |
| 3 | Paddock | Anthropic with natural elements |
| 4 | Restaurant | Anthropic |
| 5 | Parking | Anthropic with natural elements |

Source: Own elaboration

Anthropic units require for their construction of services associated with natural units or assets. Indeed, they use natural capital (e.g., materials of abiotic origin for the buildings' construction) to develop their anthropic functions, which, in many cases, also involve the transformation of another type of natural capital (e.g., material of biotic origin for the textile industry). Anthropic units could also develop their own processes of purely human origin to produce benefits (e.g., cultural functions).

The racecourse is established, therefore, as a complex anthropic system, since it consists of different units with different uses, current and potential, related to each other. All of them provide services to population: identity, aesthetic, gastronomic, etc. As mentioned above, they are anthropic services since all functions have been developed by man-made units or structures. The results of this research show that a relationship between the anthropic services identified in the socio-ecosystem can be established with the logic used by CICES for natural ecosystem services (Maes et al., 2018).

*The services classification and its complementarity*

The proposal that is being developed for an Integrated Heritage Assessment relates the four categories in which ecosystem services are classified and the possible categories for anthropic systems (as is the case study). With this, *Provisioning services* are considered as products obtained from anthropic units; *Regulating services* are the benefits obtained from the regulation of social concerns; *Cultural services* are the opportunities for people to derive cultural goods or benefits. Moreover, it is established the category of *Spatial support* as area or physical support necessary to allow certain needs and functions.

As a result of this relationship, Table 1 shows the current diversity of the services associated with the units detected in the system (racecourse) and its equivalence with the services identified in CICES. Likewise, it shows those services which are primary (necessary to allow the main activity or functions which exist to allow other functions) or secondary (those services which are not the main ones of the place).

**Table 1.** Associated services with the Zarzuela racecourse and its tourist potential

| Units | Services | Category of the service | Relevance | Tourist potential (SERVICES) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grandstands | Cultural | Relations/ social interactions | Primary | MEDIUM |
| | | Aesthetic and landscape (architectural structure) | Secondary | HIGH |
| | | Identity (historic heritage) | Secondary | MEDIUM |
| Tracks | Cultural | Sports (Physical and experiential interactions) | Primary | HIGH |
| | Spatial support | Operational area for the development of human activities | Primary | LOW |
| Offices and tracks | Cultural | Leisure and recreation with bets (experiential interactions) | Primary | HIGH |
| | Provisioning | Financial income | Primary | LOW |
| Restaurant | Cultural | Leisure and gastronomic recreation | Secondary | MEDIUM |
| | Provisioning | Provisioning (food) | Secondary | MEDIUM |
| Paddock, stable and riding arena | Spatial support | Operational area for the development of human activities | Primary | MEDIUM |
| Museum and library | Cultural | Intellectual interactions for cognitive development and training | Secondary | MEDIUM |
| Shops | Provisioning | Provision of goods and products and provision of economic benefits | Secondary | HIGH |
| | Cultural | Leisure and recess (shopping) | Secondary | HIGH |
| Parking | Spatial support | Temporary vehicle parking | Secondary | LOW |
| Offices | Regulating | Hippodrome administration and other support functions | Primary | LOW |

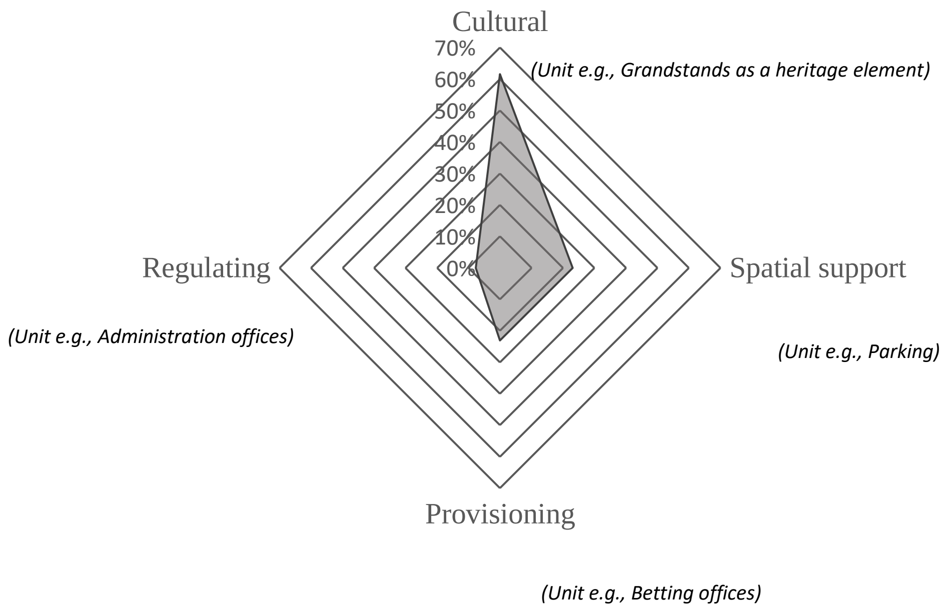
Source: Own elaboration

In order to estimate the tourism potential of the services currently offered by the racecourse, the following criteria have been taken into account:

1. The character of the services (primary or secondary) according to the relevance of the function, considering the main use of the building.
2. The nature of the supply units, considering the following components:
   - The cultural component.
   - The recreational and leisure component.
   - The playful component.
   - Shopping.

In the total count of the services offered by the socio-ecosystem units (see Figure 5), the cultural services highlight above the others (62%). In addition, its complementarity with provisioning services (23%) is feasible with the current use, becoming an attraction of great tourist potential as cultural and playful resource.

**Figure 5.** Total set of services associated with the Zarzuela racecourse




Source: Authors' research

Given the nature of the anthropic system, there will always be intrinsic cultural value in that which is being analysed, the reason being that a reference to cultural heritage is always present. Besides of the original building's function (horse races), it will have a cultural function (due its history, for its architectural value, for its author, etcetera). This means it will have a series of elements, processes, and attributes (material or immaterial) to which a supply of cultural services can be associated. These services are determined by the wide range currently offered by the racecourse, such as concerts, markets, holding events, activities for children or the service provided through the *Eduardo Torroja* museum. All this without undermining the conservation and maintenance of its infrastructure, for which there are basic criteria for conservation, maintenance and rehabilitation oriented to Modern Movement of the 20th century, in order to guarantee its conservation, preventing its demolition or disfigurement (ICOMOS, 2011). All this supported by the framework of ecosystem services for cultural services and applied to heritage.

Considering the different services, already mentioned, provided by the building and its architectural, historic, cultural, and recreational relevance, it would be easy to conceive the racecourse as a place with a high tourist influx. However, according to a study carried out within the INNOVACONCRETE project (Ramírez et al., 2019), 93.5% of visitors (Hipódromo de la Zarzuela, 2018) who attended the racecourse during the 2018 race periods were residents in Madrid, whose visits were not for tourism but mainly sports and recreational interests. This fact suggests being directly related to the low appreciation of the racecourse as cultural heritage, being reflected in the lack of tourist activity.

This data should be pointed, firstly, on the grounds of its tourist potential as cultural resource and, secondly, the high influx of tourists in Madrid, with an arrival in 2018 of 12.4 millions of visitors, 2.9% more than 2017 (INE, 2019). Therefore, it is perceived a little interest from tourism companies to include the Zarzuela racecourse as a point of visit for tourist itineraries in the province.

Likewise, it would be convenient for the racecourse managers to take into account the complementarity and quantification of the services offered by the building in order to determine the extent to which the decisions made may affect the performance of these services and, therefore, satisfaction (welfare) of visitors.

Perceiving the territory as a socio-ecosystem, it will be easier to consider the environment as a part of a whole, being able to establish new possible complementary and potential uses aimed at tourism (since its privileged location and the resources and units currently available).

Additionally, its value from the tourist point of view will be related to the reorientation of the selected dissemination channels, not limited to social media; for the content it disseminates, exalting its historical, cultural and architectural importance, promoting citizen awareness of this prominent building as concrete heritage from 20$^{th}$ century in Spain and, finally, for the chosen targets, aimed at tourism, culture and heritage.

**Conclusions**

The main use of the methodological framework presented here lies in its potential to highlight and make visible the significant benefits of cultural heritage. Once the service classification system has identified functions for a building or monument, it will be possible to identify the specific and detailed services associated with its characteristic attributes. Furthermore, in instances where there are multiple buildings, the classification system can be used to make constructional, architectural, and contextual comparisons, thus allowing for better prioritization and allocation of services among them.

The case study developed, the Zarzuela Racecourse, is a socio-ecosystem in which the units identified offer important anthropic services to society. In this sense, the cultural service stands out, underlining the importance of heritage and recreational activities offered there. Consequently, the relationship established between economic activity and cultural services makes it possible to advance towards processes of conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.

The main purpose of this effort comes from the possibility to make easy to establish diagnoses to heritage management and find out what types of services are referents, in order to make more visible the greater number of benefits that cultural heritage offers to society. Once visible, this method will allow to know the range of possibilities that the alternative uses of a building have for its enhancement and its tourist use, following methodologies such as the use of indicators or valuation of economic or non-economic techniques. Knowing why heritage is important for human, it will be easier to know how to value it and encourage it (e.g.: through tourism), increasing its benefits. As of this study, it will be necessary to establish the specific strategies to make possible the appropriate tourist products design. Subsequently, the agents involved will be able to apply their value systems and prioritize among the different uses and services, depending on the destination's goals. The ecosystem services analysis should be considered as basis for designing proposals, where conservation, awareness, enhancement, and benefits go hand in hand.

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# CHANGES IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE CAUSED BY TOURISM, THE CASE OF GUANAJUATO, MEXICO

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***ABSTRACT***

*This paper aims to generate a replicable methodology to analyze the degree of urban transformations caused by tourism, the study is conducted in the city of Guanajuato, in Mexico. The analysis was designed in two main sections, on the one hand, the changes that have been protected buildings in the city, as a result of tourism with a dynamic 10 years (2009-2019), by updating observed information sheets, cataloguing, and georeferencing of 695 protected buildings. On the other hand, the relations for the host society have caused tourist transformations in the urban landscape, by conducting a survey that addresses issues related to the material and intangible heritage are established.*

*As a result of various analyzes is obtained that the city even though it has a tourist history of more than 50 years and in certain seasons of the year, you experience moments of saturation visitors, however, changes in 10 years is a 15% tourist transformation (gentrificación or tertiarization) which it is not as representative.*

*the host society even though alarms sighting gives important problems related to tourism, tourism perceives an opportunity and conclusively acknowledge the need for promote tourism. Also, we see how 50% of people have migrated to outlying areas of the city but continue with the need to attend the historic center for its daily activities.*

*A discussion that touches on topics of interest such as tertiarization, gentrification and tourism, on an urban reality and the perception of those who inhabit arises. It is concluded that tourism has caused a major urban transformation away at present considered dangerous.*

***Keywords:*** *Urban transformations, heritage tourism, social perception.*

## Introduction and framework

There are inhabited historic towns, some of them have been declared as a World Heritage Site for its exceptionality, usually cities where the heritage is largely protected and this appointment has a number of economic and social benefits, highlighting the activity tourism so important that can be very beneficial, but at the same time can cause serious problems that go deterioration of own assets (Vinuesa, MAT, 2015).

One of the main attractions of these cities, is its landscape, in which a set of values that must be preserved and protected first for the host society are enclosed, but also for the visitor himself (Azevedo Salomao, EM, & Fuentes Farias, FJ, 2017), something that is not easy to achieve the interests of developers of tourism, who quite often seek to bring thousands of tourists without a limit, such as the case of the cities of Barcelona and Venice, in which the capacity of the target has been largely overcome, causing the company observes a problem rather than an opportunity for heritage and everyday life (Rodriguez, RM, & Fernandez, JIP, 2009).So the heritage cities must find a management system and planning to balance the relationship between heritage and tourism (Street Vaquero, M., Calzada, EF, & Miguel, SM, 2018), trying to preserve their identity, but also seeking good performance.

The landscape of cities should be studied and monitored regularly, since the landscape of the city set as its main attraction. Landscape units should observe indicators to measure the transformations taking cities from their own social and urban dynamics or economic and of course tourism, in this sense, the first thing we must do is a first delimitation of space or territory that has been protected.

In Mexico the most important cities in the country had a heritage protection since the early 80s of last century, which was called Zone of Historic Monuments, which envisaged a certain territory and a certain number of buildings which by law are protected, and in 2003 a number of elements of each property to form an important catalogue was added, which in the case of the city we took as a case study that is Guanajuato, Mexico, consists of 695 properties, not only are buildings on it you can find streets, monuments, etc, this catalogue is always done with the idea of preserving the heritage and especially so you never cease to exist (Pardo, CAH, & Sizzo, I., 2015 ).

Moreover, as mentioned Tabales and Pavon (2018), the landscape is any part of the territory, which is known by its inhabitants, and only makes sense from the perceptions of the population, ie, these spaces even when they are world heritage, the local population who enjoys every day, and who also suffer from significant economic effects such as tertiarization, gentrification which makes the inhabitants must leave these landscapes, creating a new landscape and traditional is now no intangible heritage and now must respond to the tourist service.

The new cities or expansions of historic cities, offer a number of amenities such as planned streets, services that can reach the door of the houses, you can even enjoy from urban design, same as before even though conformed beautiful cities, some of them they were almost impossible to inhabit. It is in this sense that we must also address the perception of the inhabitants of fate and bring some order and reflection before it over tourism, which is also a concept that has been studied but has multiple interpretations and therefore must stop to study well (Koens, Postma and Papp, 2018)

## Subject of study

This study is conducted in the city of Guanajuato (see photograph No. 1), Mexico. It is located in the center of the country, which favors have important tourist flows, consolidated from more than 50 years fate has been declared by UNESCO as a World

Heritage Site by four criteria, the first of which responds its irregular urban layout as it sits in a deep ravine 12 kilometers long. It is a mining town in its splendour financed important baroque constructions that make up the second criterion, the third is related to mining and mining techniques that once were appreciated throughout the world and finally forms a mining system in which small populations with a high industrial equity are included.

**Figure 1.** Panoramic view of the city of Guanajuato

Source:https://www.google.com/search?q=Guanajuato&client=firefox-bd&sxsrf=ACYBGNSxK5md0oTlxJ1QW6vjUZ06SRDP5Q:1568387544490&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwijjtbzis7kAhUEa60KHbTKCJ0Q_AUIEigC&biw=1920&bih=938#imgrc=B43E0DaNXRepxM:

Currently has approximately 190 thousand inhabitants. It is home to one of the most prestigious universities in the country, tothe state and municipal government administrations . Its economic vocation is currently industrial and tourism.

It is one of the 10 most important historical cities; it has arisen the most important national historical events. It has an important tangible and intangible cultural heritage that is recognized in its activities and gastronomy.

Annually receives more than 3 million visitors each year and has the most important Latin American cultural festival known as the Festival Internacional Cervantino. Its main attraction is a museum in which mummified of the first inhabitants of the city museum which generates a significant economic benefit to the city bodies are exhibited.

## Methodology

The main objective of this research lies in knowing what is the degree of urban transformation experienced by the tourist destination of Guanajuato, in Mexico, as well as the relationships observed by the local society, in terms of perception of transformations both tangible cultural heritage, as intangible, through two analyzes the changes in protected by law and the perception of its citizens buildings.

This paper has two records, the first of which is the realization of the list of protected buildings prepared by the Government of the State of Guanajuato, Mexico. The second moment is reached within a doctoral thesis in which a section of the tourist functionality to the card information of each of the listed buildings is added. This is based on updating inventory information these also include updating photographs of each of the buildings, as well as updating mapping to generate databases for the corresponding analysis.

On the other hand, and on the understanding that the landscape only exists according to the perception of the inhabitants of certain territory, a survey of 650 residents of the city, in which 34 items related to the perception of urban transformations are included becomes in the territory, which covers the historical center, is the tourist city, the face to face surveys were conducted and recorded on a form in google Docs., they applied at various points of the city that were considered is the confluence of the inhabitants, such as shopping malls, markets, bus stops and temples (as the city is mostly Catholic).

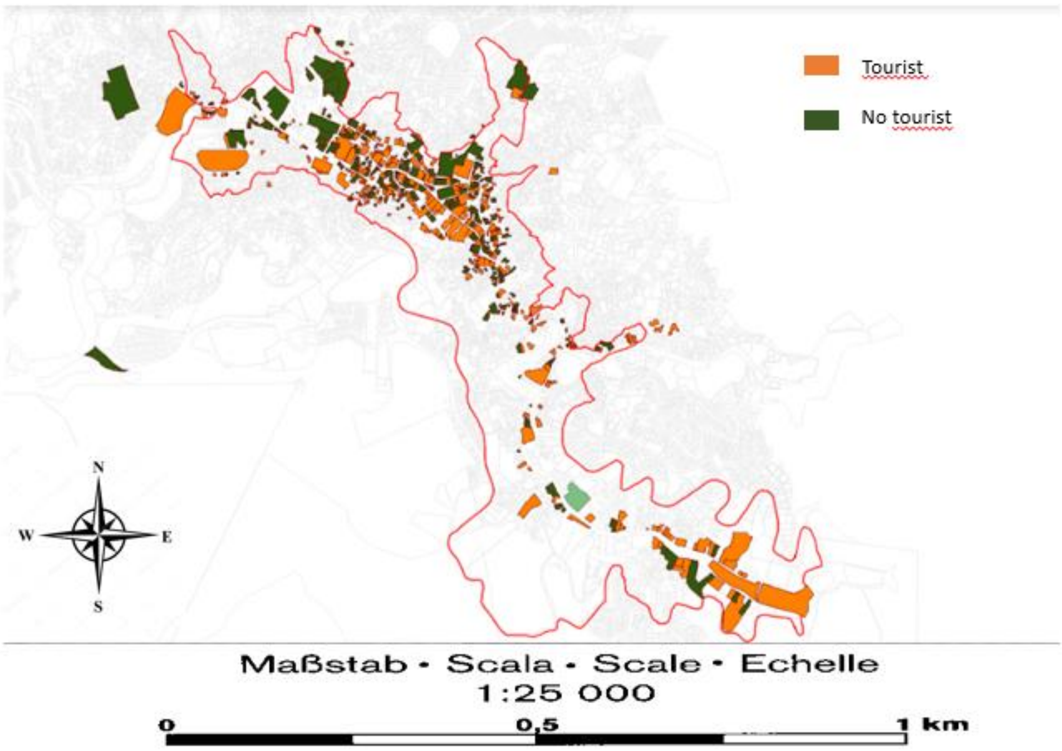
Finally a series of relationships ranging from the increase in tourists considered from 2009 to 2019, which is the period of updating the inventory of protected buildings according to data proportionate to the Hotel occupancy survey provided by the Federal Government is from Mexico.

Therefore, it is a geographical work and the transformations that historical centers observed under the influence of tourism related to society, who as already mentioned is who perceives the changes and gives a sense of roominess to a tourist destination.

**Results**

As the number of listed buildings, we find that research carried out in 2009 were 577 listed buildings (Figure 2) in updating the inventory found 162 buildings with tourist functionality, while this year are 250 tourist functionality (see graph No. 1), speaking tour functionality we refer to those properties that can be visited as are museums galleries art, craft shops, souvenir shops, candy stores, government buildings open to the public, hotels, hostels, restaurants, cafes, bars and nightclubs.

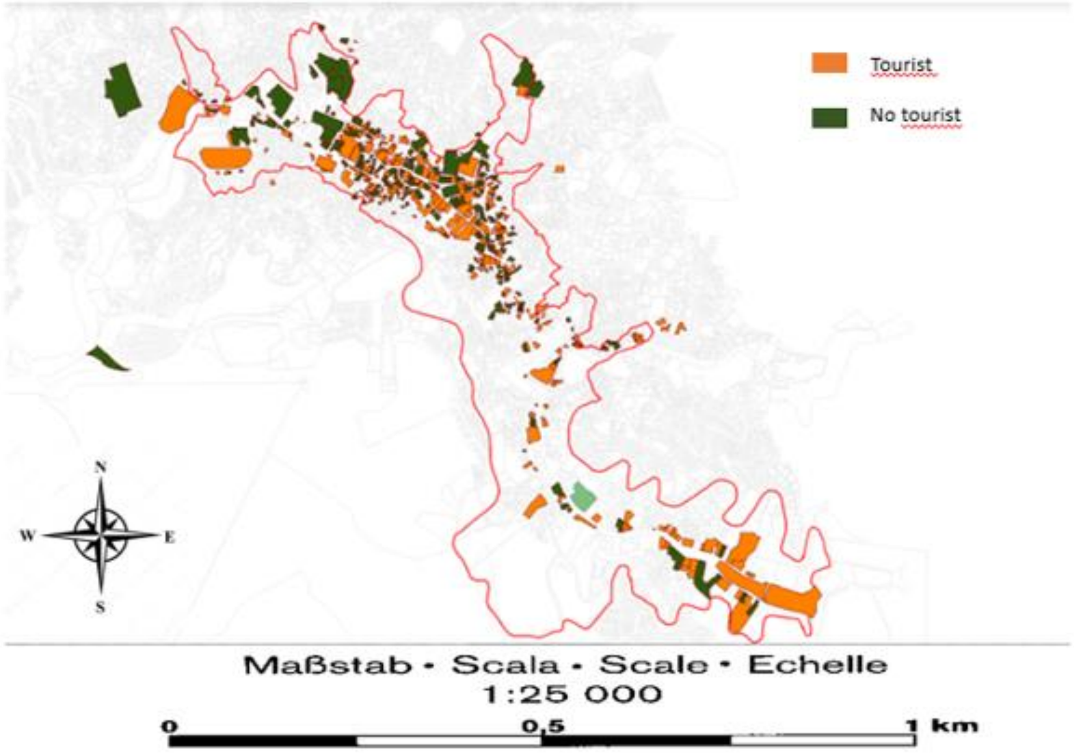
**Figure 2.** Turistic functionality of listed buildings 2009




Source: Elaboration by Agustin Ruiz Lanuza. Mapa Digital INEGI

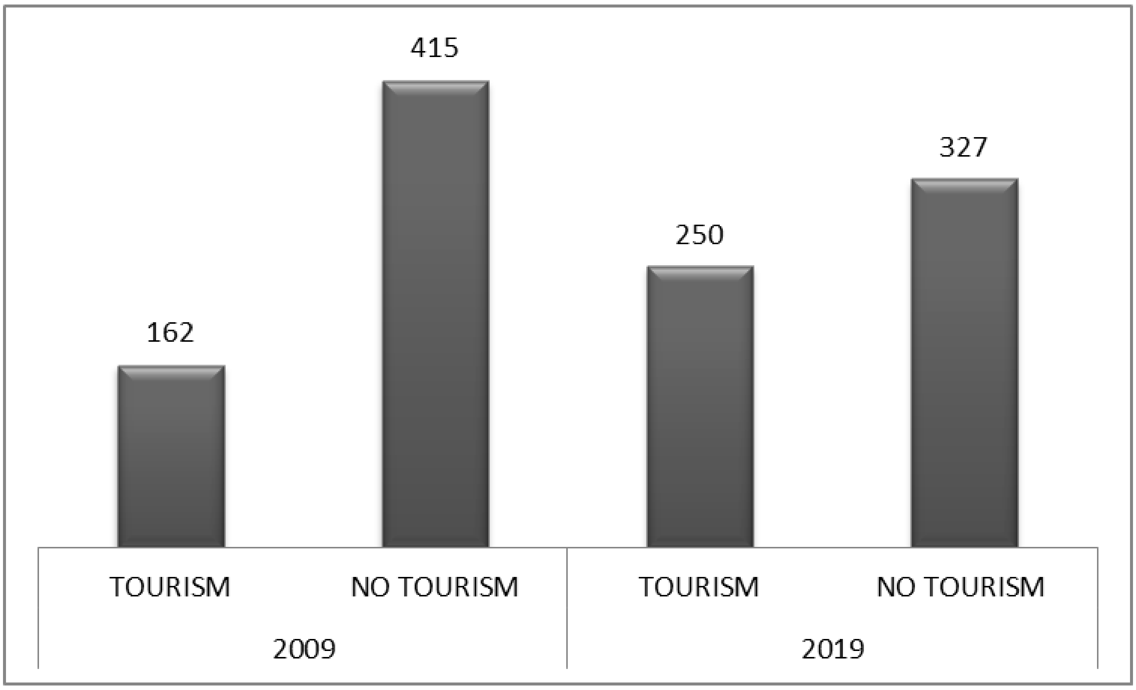
The number of protected property is 577, at this time, (Figure 3) it is necessary to clarify that the number of protected buildings are we all as there are approximately 2,500 buildings in the area of Historic Monuments, therefore it is only a representative sample since this is the spirit of its catalog, represent the most outstanding buildings in the city.

**Figure 3.**Turistic functionality of listed buildings 2019




Elaboration by Agustin Ruiz Lanuza. Mapa Digital INEGI

**Figure 4.** Relation of protected buildings 2009-2019 period




Source: Authors' research

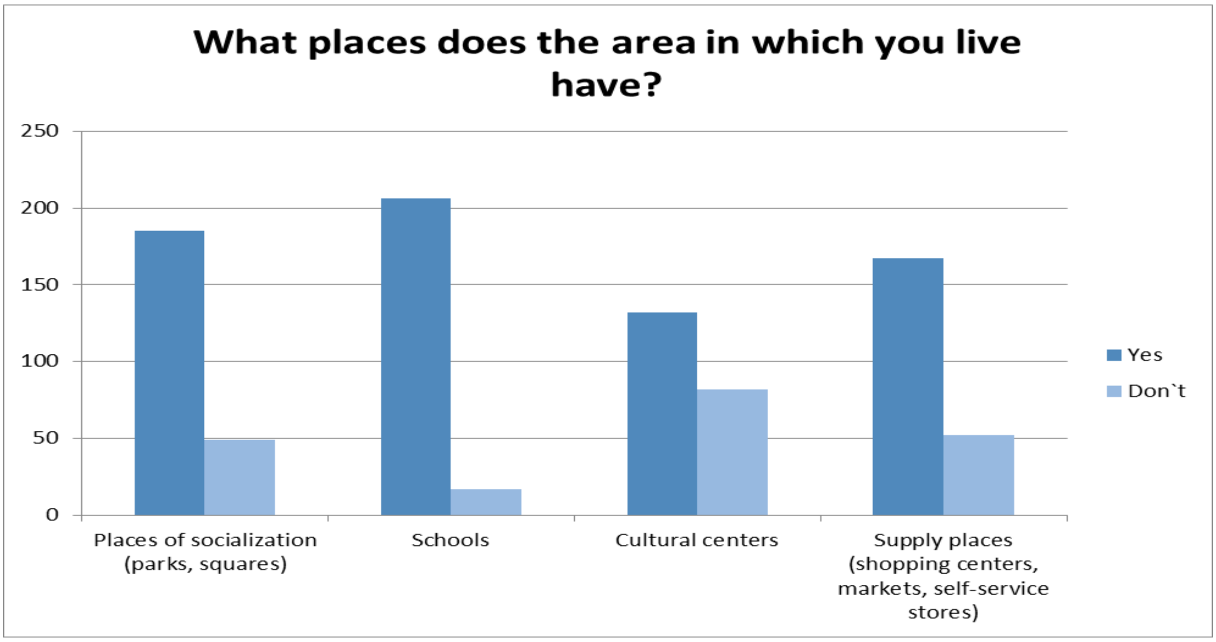
These results imply that the tourist transformation of these protected buildings is 15% in this period of 10 years, while the growth of tourist arrivals to the city is more than 50%, according to the hotel survey, it went from in 2009 418, 657 tourists staying in hotels while in 2019 was 944, 765 tourists, which we must add those staying at other establishments and hikers.

As for the second part of the investigation, in which the survey of city residents is done, we find the following:

The 99.6% were inhabitants of the city of Guanajuato, 57.4% women and 42.6% men, the vast majority, 75% live in the city for over 25 years. 52.8% live outside the city center and the rest in the middle of it.

The first set of questions is related to the services with which the place in which he lives (Figure 5), this series of questions is done to determine the need to move from their place of residence to the city center, this serves to determine the urban center, which generates a series of conflicts in the historical center, as villagers have to go to these places to carry out their activities (Krafta, 2008). The results indicate that most have socialization centers, schools, cultural centers and to a lesser extent proveeduría places (markets, supermarkets, etc.)

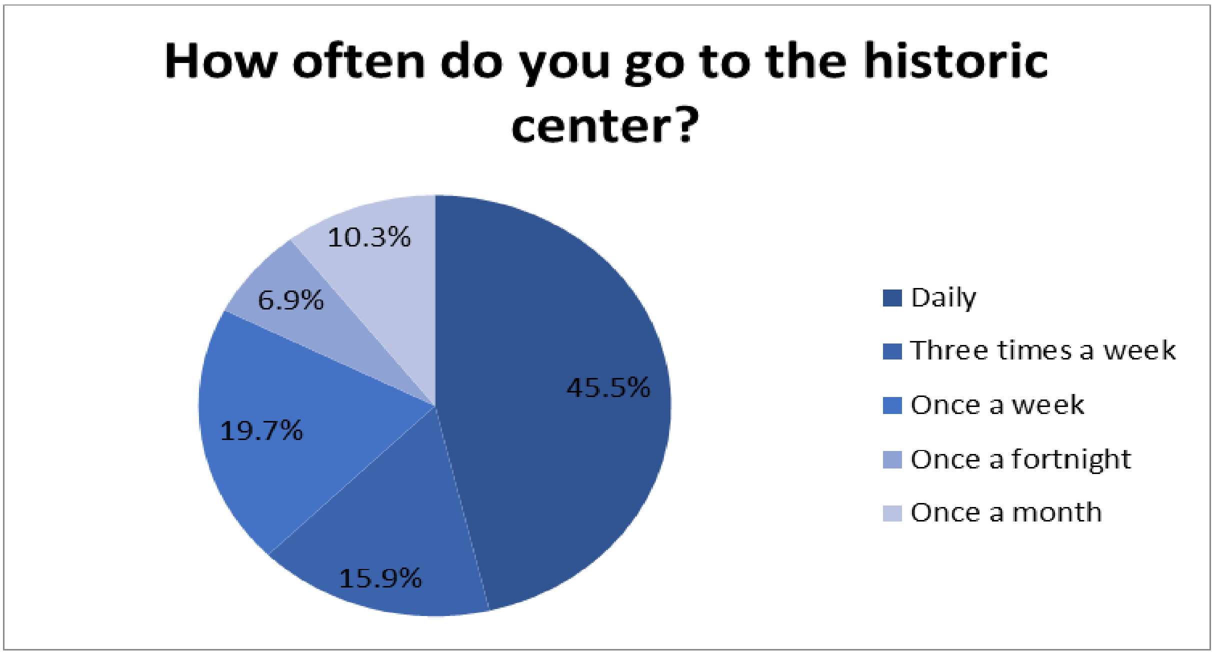
**Figure 5.** Places that have in habited areas




Source: Authors' research

The next question aims to be more specific on issues of urban centrality, since the frequency with which goes to the historic center is asked, the results indicate (Figure 6) 45.5% that goes daily; 19.7% go once a week and 15.9% attend at least three times a week, the rest comes less regularly.

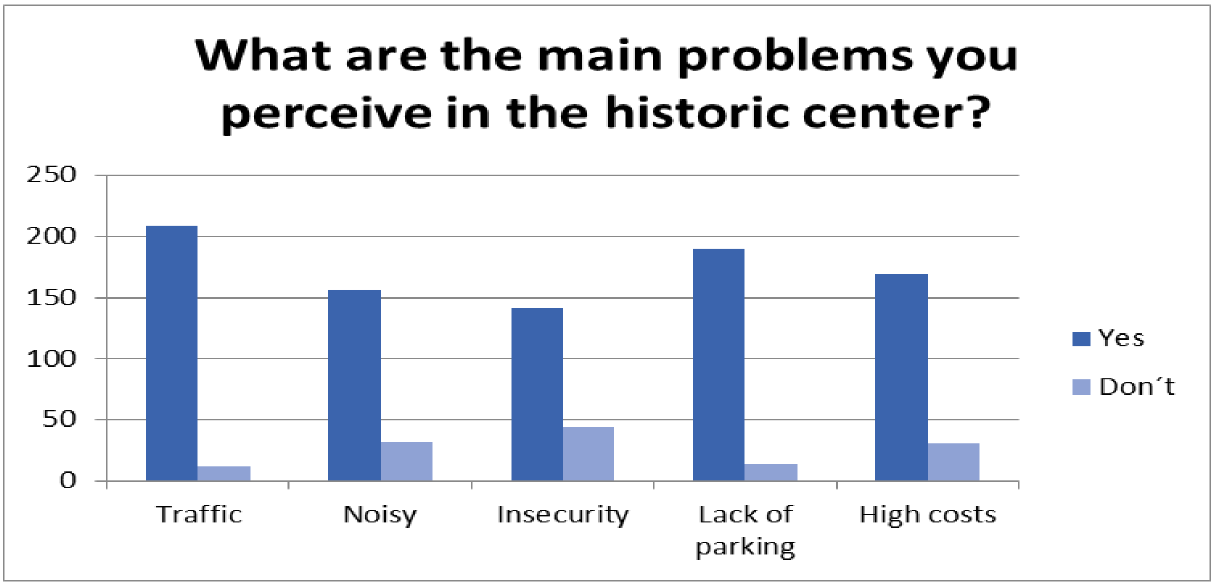
**Figure 6.** Frequency of visits to the historic centre




Source: Authors' research

The next set of questions is related to the people mentioned are the main problems perceived in the historic center (Figure 7), the most problematic vehicular traffic, lack of parking, high costs resulting tourism and noise generated by establishments such as bars and nightclubs.

**Figure 7.** Main problems in the historical center

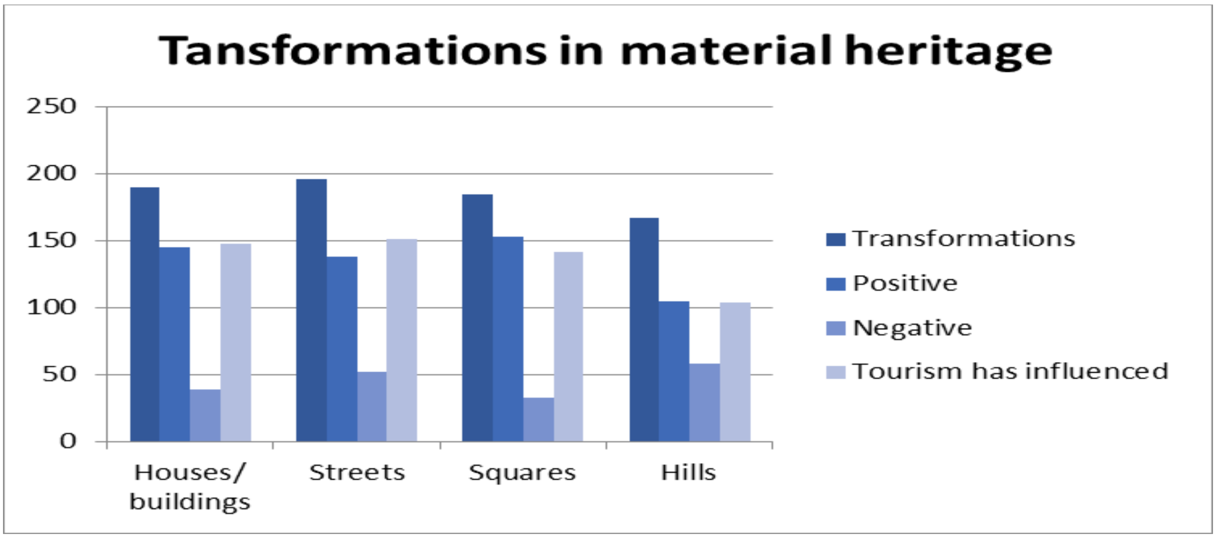



Source: Authors' research

The focus of this research is to determine the transformations of heritage by tourism, the next block is based on the material heritage (Figure 8), generally observed that the changes have been positive, in terms of protected buildings observed which have been transformed, most have been positive.

As for the streets also observe these not so positive transformations and give greater weight to these changes they have been caused by tourism. The aspect that most transformations are experiencing places, these changes have been negative.

**Figure 8.** Transformations material heritage



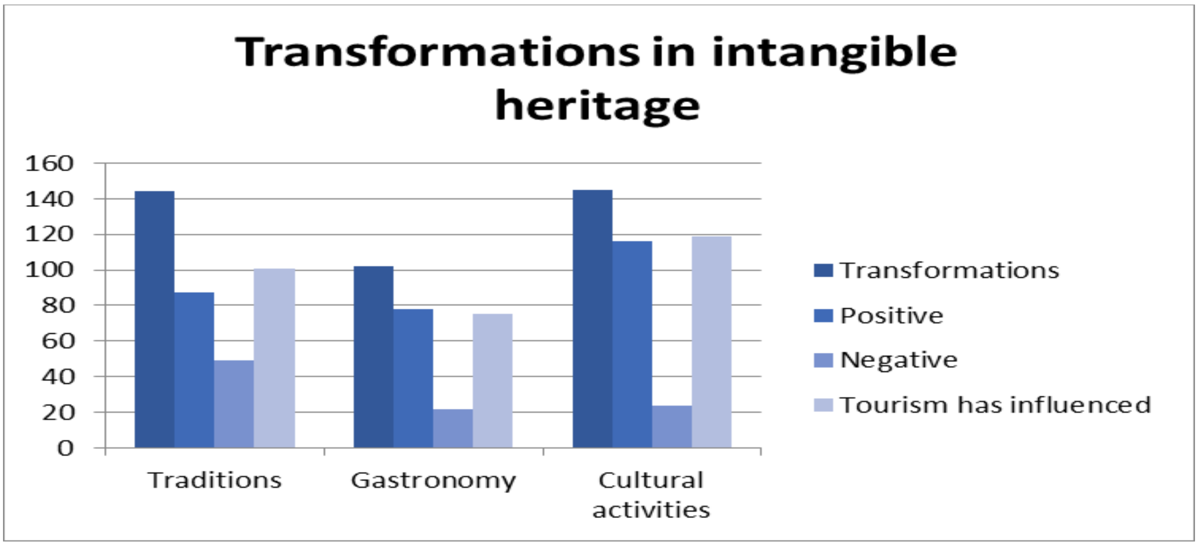

Source: Authors' research

As already mentioned, the landscape thrives on what material is the territory in question but also what intangible issues are, i.e. what is experienced in it, elements:

"*...allow to speak of heritage territories, defined as those that society assigns a value and meaning, as an inheritance or collective legacy linked to the geographical diversity of the planet, which in the case of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List UNESCO has to be universal and exceptional. The unitary conceptualization of heritage and identifying the conditions to be met territories so that they can be considered, strictly speaking, as heritage tourism destinations ...* "(Vinuesa, M. T., & Torralba, LT, 2018. 214).

Due to the above, related to the changes that tourism brings in intangible assets (Figure 9.) items were included, the results indicate that there is a strong transformation in celebration of traditions, these have not been so negative and tourism he has played an important role in its transformation. As for the food service even though they do not see an exaggerated transformation think that tourism has been an item for these are transformed positively and finally as to the changes in cultural activities, see a strong positive transformation.

**Figure 9.** Transformations of intangible heritage




Source: Authors' research

Finally, two questions that pretend to be strong and that are related to the importance of tourism are made, the first question was whether they considered that tourism is important for the city and 99.6% responded that if it is, the second question is refers to the economic impact that tourism represents personally, in which 41.7% consider that it have direct impact and 58.3% say they do not have.

**Discussion**

Currently, we are witnessing many both positive and negative phenomena of tourism in different destinations, in urban destinations are said to historic centers have been outsourced, i.e., that the buildings were housing become shops and when these refer to tourism activities is known as the phenomenon of touristification (Quintana, BA, García-Sánchez, R., Martin, MJ, Martinez, JM, & Corraliza, JA, 2019). Another situation is known as gentrification, which in its broadest definition refers to the processes faced by cities on a turnover of social classes (Mendoza, FR, 2016), which already represents a loss of customs of those who originally They inhabit. And of the tourism,

On the other hand, we see that there are destinations that need tourism for sustainable development, although it is true that we must be alert to the negative changes, it is also true that it is an important activity even in mature destinations such as Guanajuato, via generating investment and employment (Cabrera, PS, 2018), which is also be a good option for the maintenance of protected buildings, as their physical maintenance in good condition is not an easy task.

Therefore the discussion suggests that tourism necessarily cause both, positive and negative transformations that the analysis can not be simplistic and must so should be taken into account indicators but these should be made taking into account local society or hostess, and that cities are their citizens and these territories must condition them first for its inhabitants and then for visitors.

The transformation is not always negative, it is important to see how important it is in or not in, since either, at least in Mexico there are public policies that encourage urban renewal to be used for housing, because as discussed maintaining these protected buildings is not an easy task.

Moreover, intangible content of cities also affected, sometimes it is also positive, because tourism has the opportunity to evolve according the globalization even entirely without losing its originality.

When in the literature we see that the impacts of tourism in some cities is very negative, and we accuse that destination to study there are times that this can happen, these assertions and occupy the scientific community with hypotheses often to show that all the cities experience these situations, which deserves to be studied to determine the state in which your destination lies.

**Conclusions**

It is important to monitor changes in the landscape in tourist destinations, with key indicators to assess the importance of their protection, the current state of physical preservation of the buildings may be affected by the responsibilities of their owners.

Tourism plays an important role in conservation of heritage, which in the case of Mexico helps safeguard the protected heritage. While it is true that there are changes in the protected buildings, is less than the increase in visitors, i.e. tourism flows increase, but there is no strong transformation.

The city of Guanajuato, Mexico, has an important urban center, as it is home to local governments, is also a university town, which already causes a number of negative impacts on mobility issues and insecurity. It is important to generate a series of government plans to help that tourism does not represent a threat to the already complicated everyday city life. In turn, the problems relate that are most important are mostly vehicular traffic and parking, however, this indicator is not generated by tourism, while tourism it can aggravate also have to consider that about 50 % of the population live outside the historic center and often must move to the center in their own vehicles.

We note that the company is aware that tourism should result in changes in the landscape reality of the city, but it is an important activity, about half of the people brings a positive result in terms of economic development.

Finally, this work helps us to overcome the hypothesis that we set when we know the negative impacts of tourism, we provide an important framework that will allow us to manage the destination to avoid such problems associated with tourism.

This work also opens up new possibilities for research, since the fieldwork often does not reveal realities that capture the eye as the use of buildings by virtual platforms for renting accommodation, as is the Airbnb system, that hardly can be identified.

Another line of research is to understand the perception of government agencies tourism, heritage and culture as this type of cultural destinations is important to consider.

In short we are witnessing a heritage destination that while experiencing these urban transformations are being well accepted by civil society.

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# TOURISM AND DESTINATION IDENTITIES: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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***ABSTRACT***

*Tourism destination is characterized by the numerous imbalances. On the basic level, there is the immanent conflict resulting from the relationships between external demand and internal supply, seen in the overuse of public goods namely natural and cultural resources including local lifestyle. On the next level, there is also an imminent imbalance, resulting from internal conflict of interest between destination stakeholders with varying views on use of public goods. These points are need for the focus broadening of analysis from consumers and producers to usage of spaces where tourism activity takes place. Thus, spatial considerations and specifically spatial identities become the central issue in sustainable tourism destination development. Spatial identity is however also burdened by imbalances stemming from the differing identities of tourists and locals, as well as the differing identities of destination stakeholders themselves who do not necessarily all come from destination itself bringing their own identities into play.*

*In this sense, spatial identity is fluid, impermanent and multidimensional. What are the implications for destination management? This issue is explored through qualitative research, in this first phase based on focus groups including members of the academic community, public and private sector in selected Croatian destinations. The conducted pilot research shows that strategic tourism planning of tourism areas gives possible answers to externalities, imperfect markets, and usage of public goods. In conditions of market failures deliberations of tourism destination development must be subject to its carrying capacity as a composite expression of its physical characteristic, tourism resource and attraction potential, as well as of infrastructure, demographic and institutional constraints*

***Keywords:*** *destination, identity, space, tourism planning, sustainable tourism*

## Introduction

In face of unprecedented growth of tourism and the increasingly evident unwanted effects of overtourism, this paper offers a policy problem discussion on the role of tourism destination identities in empowering destination management.

## Tourism in the past decade: A shifting discourse

Following a slump in 2008 and 2009, tourism has been continually growing over the past decade. Growth rates of international arrivals worldwide have been impressive, at 7% in 2017 followed by additional 5% increase in 2018. Growth has been fueled by mature generating markets in Europe and in the Americas, amounting to a cumulative increase in outbound trips from 2010 to 2017 of 29% and 42% respectively, but particularly by the increase from new markets in the Asia/Pacific region of 60%. All top ten world outbound travel spenders, led by China, USA and Germany, have achieved growth of expenditures. Considering its mature travel destinations such as Spain and Italy, travel to the Mediterranean, encompassing Croatia as well, has been increasing at remarkable rates of 13% in 2017 and 8% in 2018. Croatia has been a part of this travel boom, its international arrivals growing 14% in 2017 and 7% in 2018. Tourism is today the third largest export category in the world, behind fuels and chemicals, ahead of automotive products and food. It generates 10% of world GDP, 7% of world exports and in 1/10 jobs. The UNWTO long-term forecast estimated at 1.4 billion international arrivals worldwide by 2020, has been reached in 2018, two years earlier than foreseen. It is now expected the 2030 forecast will most probably have to be adjusted (UNWTO, 2018). In today's world characterized by growing affluence, mobility and internationalism, the potential for future growth of tourism indeed seems unquestionable.

At the same time the discourse about tourism is changing and it is becoming much more critical. Although the negative effects of tourism, particularly in relation to the environment and social structures of places, have been widely researched, documented and acknowledged, from the early studies mainly focusing on under-developed regions (Jafari, 1989) to more recent work in developed tourism destinations (Dredge, 2010), criticism of overtourism is today intensifying, entering professional and public discourse, being a frequent feature in the press, even a reason for public protests in diverse parts of the world (Albanese, 2019; Grubiša, 2019). Overtourism is becoming an especially sensitive subject in the Mediterranean, which is the most tourism saturated region in the world (UNWTO, 2001), and of which Croatia is a part. In fact, according to some rankings, Croatia places second among top 10 countries affected by overtourism today (Vivid Maps, 2019).

From the residents' perspective tourism is seen as a major cause for unbearable crowds in public venues, lack of access to housing, rising cost of living, displacement of local population in historical city centers, degraded natural landscape due to overbuilding and polluted natural environments. The population of the historical center of Dubrovnik, mirroring its ascent to Croatia's top tourism destination, has dwindled from approximately 5500 permanent residents in 1963 to an estimated 800 in 2014 (Kunst, 2014). The same tourism led gentrification process is much more rapidly also underway in other coastal Adriatic towns, such as Split, Zadar and Šibenik. This, however, is not a process reserved for small and picturesque places but is also evident in much larger and one would think resilient cities, such as Venice or Barcelona. Natural landscapes, particularly national parks and other sights under protective regimes are also being over-run by tourists, apparently 'the higher the protection, the graver the risk of pollution and degradation'. A sample of Croatian newspaper headlines from the summer of 2019 declare: 'Dubrovnik tops the list of towns killed by tourism' … 'Should new construction be forbidden in Makarska before it suffocates in concrete' … 'The summer of 2039 will offer us a view of a devastated and wasted landscape, while we will still be wondering where we went wrong …'. At the same time, the level of visitor irritation can also be expected to keep increasing in relation to practically every destination experience, ranging from availability of parking, beach chairs and attraction entrance tickets to overall perception of value for money. The potential of tourism for disruption, even devastation also seems unquestionable, increasingly leading to considerations of tourism containment and even de-growth.

The Travel &Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 published by the World Economic Forum states that in the context of the travel industry's enormous growth potential, but also increasing pressure on places, infrastructure and services, travel and tourism competitiveness for competitiveness sake may become a growing constraint on the sector as a whole, concluding that travel and tourism is at a tipping point if not managed correctly.

**Tourism management: Management of unbalanced and conflicted destination systems**

It is not the idea here, however, to elaborate the impacts of tourism as, in the words of a renowned and one of the earliest tourism scholars, Dr. Valene Smith, …'the issue of whether tourism is a blessing or a blight is now essentially academic, given the value of tourism as (one) the world's largest industries and its role as a global employer and customer' (Smith and Brent, 2001). What is at issue is how to manage tourism and, more precisely, how to sustainably manage tourism destinations, the latter being at the core of tourism as a place-based phenomenon. According to a recent UNWTO survey, sustainable destination management is the goal of all 101 member states surveyed with two-thirds linking sustainability and competitiveness (UNWTO, 2019).

Tourism destinations are, however, in their very nature unbalanced and conflicted. First, in a disproportionally large number of destinations tourism generates incredible pressure competing for spatial, physical, cultural, human, economic and every other resource of a place and, since it allows relatively easy entry, as well as relatively quick returns for a multitude of providers, it easily displaces other 'forms of life'. Places in Croatia's premier tourism region along the Adriatic coast have seen most traditional economic activities, such as fishing, agriculture or crafts, virtually disappear while modern job creating sectors in technology or services other than those directly related to tourism are practically irrelevant, thus being unbalanced, tourism dependent monocultures. Second, destinations are highly complex, interacting systems comprised of numerous and diverse organizations in private, public and NGO sectors, the local population, temporary residents and various tourist segments, all with different, even contrary interests, expectations and visions of tourism development also often existing in their own 'bubbles' (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003; Manente and Minghetti, 2006; Wang and Pizam, 2011). Such disfunctional systems, if not managed correctly, especially in face of tourism's aggressive nature can be detrimental to public and common good, contribute to loss of competitive edge and result eventually in destination stagnation and decline (Buhalis, 2000; Hovinen, 2002). Thus, cooperation among stakeholders can be seen as a prerequisite for planning, development and delivery of integrated tourism products and for destination viability (Beritelli, 2010).

## Collaborative destinations

A significant body of literature emphasizes stakeholder collaboration as a cornerstone of destination management. Sharing a common understanding, a common agenda and cooperating through various types of both formal and informal partnerships and networks would result in sustainable destination development. Moreover, this line of thinking stresses the notion that organizations within destinations should adjust their strategies toward achieving collaborative rather than competitive advantage (Fyall, Garrod and Wang, 2012). In other words, destinations must cooperate internally to be able to compete externally. It has been noted that tourism, more than most economic sectors, involves the development of some kind of cooperative function (Scott, Cooper and Biaggio, 2008). Government, guided by public interest determined by an evaluation framework, should lead in mediating conflict (Dredge, 2010).

Following this general line of thinking, Croatia has been one of many countries attempting to institutionalize cooperation among tourism stakeholders as a mechanism of destination management. In fact, recently passed legislature delegates destination management in Croatia to the tourism board system (NN 52/19) which, organized at local and regional level and encompassing representatives of diverse tourism related stakeholders within a destination, are seen as integrative hubs managing destinations through several strategic and operational tourism development and marketing plans based on majority reached agreement. Although the results of this model remain to be seen and acknowledging stakeholder collaboration as the critical underlying principle of destination management, experience shows plans and councils of tourism industry stakeholders are alone not necessarily a strong enough 'glue' to hold together a, by nature, unbalanced and conflicted tourism destination system. Thus, the critical question is what is that additional 'glue' or how can collaboration within a destination be empowered?

## Destination identities: Empowering collaborative destinations

In complex, multi-stakeholder systems, such as tourism destinations, collaboration is the mechanism or technique of management, but the substance or the 'stuff' of management comes from destination identities. These need to be discerned, agreed upon and delivered in a collaborative manner.

Firstly, there is the question of a destination's competitive identity. Stemming from branding and, specifically, from destination branding literature, competitive identity is seen as a concept which upholds a destination's fundamental and permanent values, being 'the truth' or the 'the DNA' of a destination which is relevant to both hosts and guests (Anholt, 2007; Buncle, 2009). As such, competitive identity is the central unifying idea which, once discovered, must 'be lived' by all the different destination stakeholders in everything they do. Whether it is tourism and other destination products and services or marketing communication across diverse platforms targeted at different market segments, they all need to be aligned with the core message stemming from the competitive identity. A destination's competitive identity is 'the theme' with which all actions by diverse stakeholders must 'click', thus having the power to reduce dissonance and ease destination management.

Secondly, there is the issue of a destination's spatial identity. Research shows that even though place identity is a shifting concept, a process characterized by fluidity and plurality due to greater geographic and social mobility and also due to internal community dynamics, a common denominator of qualities that make up landscape identity at a local level does exist nevertheless (Loupa Ramos, 2019). A community's 'sense of place' enhances the commitment to collaboration and involvement in decisions regarding use of space (Kalandides, 2011). Furthermore, tourism is essentially a place-based phenomenon, and, from the market's point of view, destination choice is largely determined by the beauty, picturesquesness or uniqueness of natural and cultural landscapes of places. Thus, a competitive tourism product consists of public and common good, such as beaches, natural and historical protected areas, a variety of other nature based and cultural sites and of infrastructure, as well as of unbuilt natural landscape all of which the public or the private sector cannot deliver effectively by itself. Managing space, as a destination's probably most valuable resource, can prompt realistic interest and compromise-based collaboration contributing significantly to effective destination management.

**Policy implications**

Mitigating or even counteracting tourism's aggressive nature, considering on the one hand its further growth potential and, on the other, the conflicts and imbalances inherent to tourism destinations, requires greater attention be paid to raising the effectiveness of tourism destination management. Bolstering collaborative capabilities of destinations, empowered by unifying concepts of destination competitive and spatial identities, can provide the needed 'edge' and be crucial components of proactive destination management. For developed destinations already facing the challenges tourism brings, as well as those seeking tourism development, this line of thinking logically implies:

Collaboration within a destination should be extended beyond tourism industry stakeholders (e.g. accommodation, food and beverage providers, attractions, etc.) and the political elites to include the broader community impacted by tourism. In other words, greater emphasis should be placed on community involvement in tourism planning and management processes. This entails improved modes of communication within a destination, additional formal and/or informal forums of discussion ('beyond tourism boards') and a more democratic and transparent decision making process;

Discerning destination competitive and spatial identities in a consultative manner should no longer be reserved for academic exercises but be incorporated into tourism and spatial planning and management. Since both competitive and spatial identity are not static concepts, they need be periodically researched and monitored. This entails greater 'connectivity' between research, planning and management;

Tourism and spatial planning must be based on destination carrying capacity assessment, that is on agreed upon acceptable limits of change tourism is likely to generate in local communities (such as, increased and imported labor, increase in share of built space, infrastructure costs, etc.). Carrying capacity must also be monitored and periodically revisited;

Adjustment of spatial planning methodology should lead to its transformation into an integrated interdisciplinary process, based on knowledge of spatial, tourism and community systems. Spatial plans need to be proactive, responsive, and up-to-date. They must be monitored and adjusted.

Adjustment of tourism planning methodology should lead to its higher level of integration with spatial planning, the two having to be 'on the same track'. Tourism plans also need to be responsive and up-to-date, therefore being monitored and adjusted periodically;

There needs to be higher investment in human resource capacities in destination management. This refers to increasing numbers of employees, their know-how and skill levels, as well as to diversifying the tasks which need to be carried out in order to create a more responsible destination management system.

## Concluding remarks

Coming to grips with tourism impacts, in an honest, responsible push toward sustainability is a pressing issue because so many places, Croatia included, depend on tourism. Based on research, but going beyond research, developing management models, testing them, implementing, evaluating and adjusting them is critical because, as we know, tourism is a blessing and a blight, depending on what we make of it.

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*Zakon o turističkim zajednicama i promicanju hrvatskog turizma*, NN 52/19

# TYPOLOGY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS IN BULGARIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Currently the tourist attractions are not well defined in the country despite of the recent significant financial public support for the adaptation and socialization of the rich cultural heritage for tourism purposes. The Ministry of tourism has launched an e-register of tourist attractions, festivals, and events without clear guidance for local authorities on the selection of tourist sites and events to be inscribed and how they should be classified. At the same time some policy documents are in process of elaborating - a Strategy for the development of Bulgarian culture and a master plan for cultural tourism development, requiring a practical typology of tourist attractions in order to mainstream the future activities. Thus, the main aim of the research is to provide to key stakeholders a theoretically sound, workable, and acceptable typology of cultural heritage attractions to support their proper and sustainable management. In addition, the typology should guide the own empirical research of cultural heritage attractions ensuring that most if not all of attractions types are covered. The methodology of research is based on a thorough review of scientific literature on tourist attractions and their typology as well as of relevant legislation and strategies in Bulgaria. The proposed typology was tested through field research including semi-structured interviews with attractions' operators and questionnaire surveys of tourists. The contribution is both theoretical – further development of existing definitions and typology, and practical – improved focus of public policies and allocation of public funds for conversion of cultural heritage into tourist attractions.*

***Keywords:*** *tourist attraction, cultural heritage, heritage attraction, typology, tourism demand and supply, management, sustainability*

## Introduction

The public support for the development of cultural heritage attractions in Bulgaria started after the year 2000, utilizing the pre- and after-accession European funds and national co-financing. In the period 2002 – 2013 more than EUR 225 million have been invested in the restoration, conservation, and socialization of cultural heritage sites for their adaptation for tourist visits, as well as in their promotion (Marinov et al., 2017). Cultural tourism and cultural heritage attractions are in the focus of tourism development strategies since 2006, including the specific Cultural Tourism Development Strategic Plan, adopted in 2009 and the current Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (2014 – 2030). In 2013 the fully revised Tourism Act for the first time provided a definition for the tourist attraction to facilitate and direct the public interventions of EUR 100 million allocated for cultural heritage sites of global and national significance in the period 2014-2020. In 2012-2014 an interdepartmental task-force headed by the Minister of regional development and the Minister of culture was assigned with the task to prioritize the tourist attractions (mainly cultural heritage) to be supported through the operational program "Regions in Growth" (2014-2020) which completed its work without a significant progress allowing the support to all sites enlisted as being of national and worldwide importance (around 1000). In 2015 the Ministry of Tourism launched a web-based register of tourist attractions in Bulgaria, in which currently about 3600 attractions are enlisted. The primary intention of establishing their property and improving their management was shifted towards allowing potential visitors to find information easily and quickly about the attractions, including accommodation and other tourist services nearby (Register of tourist attractions). In 2016 an online Register of tourist festivals and events with the same purposes was also introduced, compiling about 1870 festivals and events (Register of tourist festivals and events). No explicit guidance to local authorities was provided resulting in lack of criteria for enlisting sites and events (letting local authorities to select attractions on their own subjectively) and of unified terminology and classification resulting in 346 types of attractions (as proposed directly by local authorities). In 2019 the Ministry of culture is in the process of elaborating a Strategy for the development of Bulgarian culture and expressed its needs of practical typology of tourist attractions to mainstream future activities. At the same time, the Master Plan of Cultural Tourism Development in Bulgaria for the period 2020 – 2025 of the Ministry of Tourism is also under discussion.

Thus, the main aim of the research is to provide to key stakeholders a theoretically sound, workable and acceptable typology of cultural heritage attractions to support their proper and sustainable management. The specific objectives include the elaboration of a definition of a cultural heritage attraction and the development and approbation of a typology of cultural heritage attractions in Bulgaria.

## Literature review

To clarify the research methodology a thorough literature review was undertaken. As pointed out by Richards (2001) cultural tourism is conceived as a dichotomy between culture and tourism, which implies a clear understanding of the scope of culture and cultural heritage, hence the range of cultural tourism and cultural heritage tourism. On the other hand, cultural heritage attractions are the intersection of two sets: cultural heritage and tourist attractions, which requires also analyzing the nature and scope of tourist attractions, as well as the approaches to their classification and typology.

In recent years, because of the democratization of culture, the increasing convergence of cultures and the changed daily life of people, additional meanings and functions have been attributed to culture (Richards, 2001). Quoting Littrell (1997), the same author states that culture is a broad concept and includes what people think (attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values), what people do (patterns of behavior or lifestyle), and what people create (art, artifacts, cultural products), therefore, culture consists of processes (ideas and lifestyles of people) and products of those processes (buildings, artifacts, art, customs, "atmosphere").

Ruoss and Alfarè (2013) outline the framework of cultural heritage, pointing out that cultural heritage is much more than "stones and bones" of the past and includes all aspects of the past and present that a community considers valuable and wishes to pass on to future generations. They also trace the transformation in the understanding of cultural heritage over time, summarizing that in the past, cultural heritage was only understood as tangible heritage and mainly included monuments and great works of art, so the cultural significance was a function of high aesthetic value or of connection with an important person or historical event. Today, however, in addition to aesthetic and historical values, social values such as traditional practices or beliefs are also considered. For this reason, the definition of cultural heritage has become much broader, encompassing all the creative manifestations of the existence of people in the past, which have been passed down to the present generation, also including intangible heritage. In their view, cultural heritage can be grouped into the following two broad categories: tangible heritage (further divided into movable and immovable) and intangible heritage. That concept is well covered and developed in more detail in the UNESCO cultural conventions on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage (1972), and on safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage (2003). Those conventions are transposed in the Bulgarian legislation, related to culture and cultural heritage.

According to the Council of EU Conclusions (2014) "cultural heritage consists of the resources inherited from the past in all forms and aspects - tangible, intangible and digital (born digital and digitized), including monuments, sites, landscapes, skills, practices, knowledge and expressions of human creativity, as well as collections conserved and managed by public and private bodies such as museums, libraries and archives."

Thus, cultural tourism relates to all aspect of culture as defined above and encompasses cultural heritage tourism, which is based on cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible. Many authors have tried to define the scope of cultural heritage tourism, demonstrating similar to the mentioned understanding of its nature and coverage (Richards, 2001; Smith, 2003; Cengiz et al., 2006; Murzyn-Kupisz, 2012). Some authors consider only tangible heritage as a foundation of cultural heritage tourism (Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Williams, 2003), however this approach contradicts to the recent perception of cultural heritage.

The literature review shows that there is no unified definition of tourist attractions (some authors refer to them as visitor attractions, like Swarbrooke, 2001; Leask, 2010, etc.) and the problem is exacerbated by the use of different terminology (e.g. attractions, resources, potential, landmarks, etc.). Nevertheless, three basic views on the nature and scope of tourist attractions are identified:

Tourist attractions as anything that draws visitors to a destination (Boorstin, 1964, cited by Richards, 2001; Gunn, 1988; Lew, 1987, Inskeep, 1998 and many others). Gunn goes so far as to consider the homes of friends and relatives as attractions as well. According to Lew (1987) tourist attractions are landscapes to observe, activities to participate in, and experiences to remember. He adds that in some cases facilities and services may also be regarded as attractions, namely vehicles, accommodation facilities, other services. Inskeep (1998, p. 34) considers as an attraction the overall environmental quality, incl. air, water and noise pollution, cleanliness, streets' lighting, availability of public transport, public toilets, etc. According to MacCannell (1976, cited by Lew, 1987) tourists themselves may in some cases be regarded as an attraction too.

Tourist attractions as a potential or resource. Kusen (2010) explicitly uses the term "potential attractions", distinguishing them from "real" attractions. Mariot (1974) distinguishes the so called "localization determinants" (related to the natural and cultural features of the area) that determine where tourism can be developed, emphasizing that they remain only a potential if there is no demand (selective determinants) or access and infrastructure (implementation determinants). Similar is the interpretation of tourist resources although stronger emphasis is put on the ability to appeal to and attract visitors. Kusen (2010) explicitly states that tourism resources are a synonym for potential tourist attraction. Until recently 'tourism resources" was the dominant term in the Bulgarian literature (Bachvarov and Pirojnilk, 1978; Marinov and Bachvarov, 1990; Popova, 1993; Apostolov, 2003). Tourism resources are defined as sites and phenomena satisfying the specific recreational needs of people and therefore able to attract visitors. The cited authors made a clear distinction between "preconditions" and "resources" and emphasized the required process of transformation into "assets" and inclusion in the (actual) tourism supply. Still the term is often used with the meaning of potential even by some of the same authors (e.g. the division of resources into assets and reserves). Moreover, a broader interpretation of tourism resources incorporates also human, financial and other resources of destination (examples are quoted by Ivanova, 2017, 90) that blurs additionally the interpretation of the term "tourism resources".

Tourist attractions as a developed and managed tourist product serving visitors. Andersen (2004, 172) states that the definition of tourist attraction should embrace the concepts of both 'tourism' and 'management'. Pearce (1991, cited by Benckendorff, 2015) considers the attraction as a focus of attention not only of visitors but also of the management. Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990) emphasize on the need of proper management of the attraction. Leiper (1990) stresses on the need of markers (to be provided by the management) and the fact that tourists are not magically "attracted" to tourist attractions but are "pushed" to them on their own motives. For Swarbrooke (2002) the attractions are the most important component in the tourist system and the core of the tourist product. Benckendorff (2006) and Edelheim (2015) also underline the management function. Kusen (2010, 2017) defines real tourist attractions and points out that the real tourism attractions determine the actual tourism product of a destination as well as that the tourism attraction system "is based on the convergent properties of tourism, that is, the process of conversion of tourism resources (possessing a seed of attractiveness) into (destination) tourism product". Tourist resources, even valuable and unique, need proper treatment and management to become "attractions" and start receiving certain tourist flows (Manente, 2008, quoted by Ivanova, 2017, 89).

The officially accepted definition of a tourist attraction in Bulgaria determines the attraction as a natural, cultural or purposefully created site of tourist interest, most often related to natural, tangible or intangible cultural heritage and/or historical event, or an artificially created recreational site, providing services for cognitive or educational purposes and/or opportunities for recreation or entertainment (Tourism Act, 2013). That definition is perceived as quite broad (non-operational) and on the other hand it fully disregards the management aspect.

As summarized by Edelheim (2015) the common thing between the most recent definitions is that they view attractions as objects, spaces, places or distinctive features and events that represent managed entities. Some of the difficulties predetermining the lack of a unified definition relate to the number of visitors that have to visit the site before it can be classed as an attraction, the great diversity of the attractions and the motivations for being visited (Benckendorff, 2006), as well as to the fact that not all attractions are designated, not all of them are permanent and many of them possess uncontrollable and unmanageable aspects (Edelheim, 2015).

As for cultural attractions, according to Richards (2001) they include both heritage-based attractions and art-based attractions, or otherwise the two large groups are respectively based on products (material culture) and processes (cultural events and festivals). It should be noted that some events and festivals could also be based on tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In that aspect Getz and Page (2016) pay special attention to event tourism and present a typology of events, according to which festivals and culture (including heritage) fall in the same group.

Many authors have tried to classify or develop typologies of tourist attractions not differentiating the two processes. We do not consider classification and typology as being synonyms or interchangeable terms. We accept classification as the act or process of dividing things and their arrangement into groups or categories according to a particular criterion/variable, so that things with a similar characteristic are in the same group, while the typology is the study of or analysis, based on types or categories, revealing the way the parts of something are organized or connected.

In that context there exist a great number of criteria to classify the attractions – the core resource of the attractions (Benckendorff, 2006), ownership, catchment area, number of visitors, location environment, scale, target market, visitor benefits (Swarbrooke, 2002), spatial aspects (Wall, 1997), etc. An additional discussion point is whether tourist attractions include events and intangible things or are confined only to "material" and permanent objects.

Lew (1987) identifies three types of attraction typologies, depending on the approach applied, namely:

Ideographic list of attractions (formal/nominal approach or description of attractions), in which ideographic categories define and specify tourist attractions according to various specific attributes. It is noteworthy that within this approach events are most often excluded because of their non-permanent nature;

Organizational (or structural) approach, which considers factors such as capacity, space, and time scale. These considerations are important for the planning and marketing of attractions;

Cognitive approach, incorporating perceptions of attractions and tourists' experiences, considering the expected benefits.

The studied typologies of attractions worth mentioning include Lew (1987), Swarbrooke (2001, 2002), Hall and McArthur (1993, cited by Richards, 2001), Richards (2001), Prentice (1994, quoted by Williams, 2003), Kušen (2010), and from Bulgarian authors – Marinov and Bachvarov (1990) and Apostolov (2003).

In general, the review established a large range of criteria for the classification of attractions (some of them closely interrelated) and a great variety of typologies, including in terms of the terminology used. At the same time, there are only a few typologies of cultural and cultural heritage attractions, applying mainly the ideographic approach. The main problems faced in the elaboration of an exhaustive typology of cultural attractions refer to the transformation of attractions in time and to their hybrid nature (Richards, 2001). Those conclusions lead to the following two consequences:

1) On one hand, there could be no ideal (universal) typology of tourist resources or attractions. No single approach can cover the full range of scientific interests in tourist attractions (Lew, 1987). In a different context and for different research or management and policy purposes, it is necessary and possible to combine different criteria for classification and typology.

2) On the other hand, all of these criteria and the corresponding classifications and typologies are likely to be important for different aspects of research. But a practically oriented typology could not work with so many criteria - the challenge is to select those that are relevant in terms of managing tourism resources and attractions (and relevant policies), visitor experiences and services, as well as preserving and maintaining the cultural values. They could probably be specified in three groups: 1) criteria, related to the genesis and nature of attractions; 2) criteria, crucial to the "attractiveness" of the attractions and the ability to create experiences; and 3) criteria, related to the opportunities for their use and management.

**Methodology**

The methodology of research is based on a thorough review of scientific publications on tourist attractions and their typology (as presented in the literature review) as well as of relevant legislation and existing registers of Ministry of Culture (Register of cultural values with national and global significance, Register of museums, Registers of cultural heritage reserves). On that basis a draft definition as well as a draft typology of cultural heritage attractions are developed. The testing of the elaborated typology is done through field research in June-July 2019, following a predefined itinerary in the country to cover different types of cultural heritage attractions, and applying the following tools:

Desk research of the attractions under study;

Semi-structured interviews with "operators" of tourist attractions, represented by their managers or employees with the necessary competencies (covering 46 sites, 26 of which designated as cultural values of global and national significance);

Survey among visitors of cultural heritage attractions (face-to-face interviews with a standardized questionnaire, 668 respondents interviewed at 30 sites);

Expert observations and evaluations.

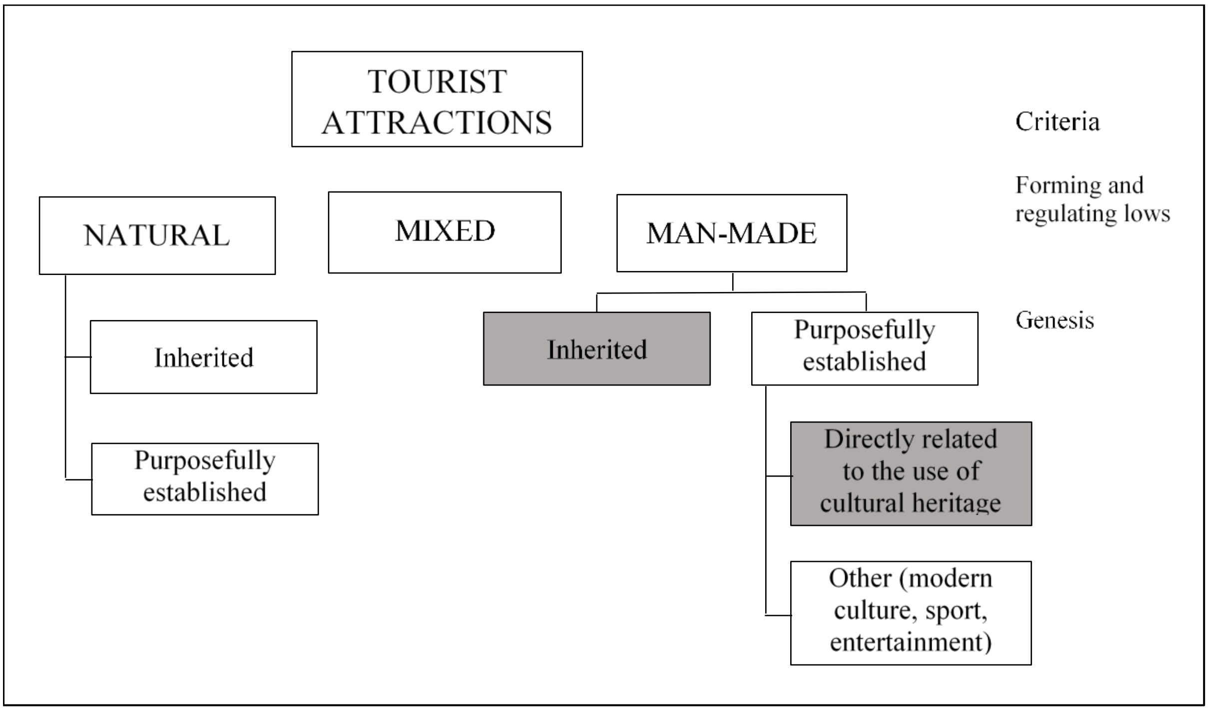
At this stage the research focus was on tangible heritage attractions, although some aspects of the movable and intangible heritage were covered through the visitor survey (e.g. importance of different cultural heritage elements and features in the decision to visit the destination).

**Results and Discussion**

The working definition of tourist attraction is developed on the basis of the existing legal definition (Tourism Act, 2013) to ensure terminological coherence, acceptability and applicability, and at the same time to fill some of existing gaps: Tourist attraction is a natural, cultural or purposefully created site of tourist interest, most often related to natural, tangible or intangible cultural heritage and/or historical event, or an artificially created recreational site, providing services for cognitive or educational purposes and/or opportunities for recreation or entertainment, that is developed and managed to serve visitor needs and actually and regularly attracts considerable number of visitors.

The proposed typology of attractions (from which a typology of cultural heritage attractions can be derived) is developed at several levels (Figure 1):

**Figure 1.** Starting typology of tourist attractions and scope of cultural heritage attractions




Source. Authors' research

1) Forming and regulating laws and processes - according to this criterion tourist attractions are divided into natural and man-made (in some typologies a third type is introduced - mixed, intermediate);

2) Genesis - by this criterion tourist attractions are divided into inherited (endowed) and purposefully (artificially) created. The things of the past have fulfilled a certain social function that they have often lost over time. The purposefully created tourist attractions are aimed mainly at the visitors, but often even their initial function is related to the search, collecting and preservation of "things" (e.g. museums). The criterion is applicable to both man-made and natural objects and phenomena. It somewhat overlaps with the orientation towards tourists (tourist oriented, and non-tourist oriented), but they are not identical. From the point of view of the objectives, in the next stages artificially created attractions are excluded, unless they are directly related to the use of the heritage (for example, museums, galleries, monuments, etc.). )

3) Combination of the criteria palpability (tangible and intangible), persistence/durability and localization. By this combination, tourist attractions are divided into:

Sites/places - divided into inherited and artificially created; the sites (which correspond to the concept of tangible cultural heritage) are fixed in space and durable;

Events - divided into inherited (e.g. traditional feasts, religious holidays and events, fairs) and artificially created (festivals, reenactments, performances); they are of short duration (impermanence), can be elastic in terms of time (time of conduct) and place;

Intangible - in many cases non-localized ("background"), usually associated with a larger area or the whole country; on the other hand, they are permanent.

4) Nature/Sphere/Function (past or present) - mainly according to the Cultural Heritage Act classifying the cultural values according to the cultural or scientific sphere to which they are related (e.g. archeological, historic, architectural, ethnographic, etc.).

Subject of further typology and research are the man-made tourism attractions that are inherited (cultural heritage) or artificially created to present and utilize the cultural heritage (colored boxes in Figure 1). The proposed typology is presented in Figure 2. An additional dimension is time (the historical periods associated with tourist attractions). The proposed periods are in line with those adopted in the Cultural Heritage Act with one exception - Antiquity is divided into two periods: 1) Thracian and Hellenistic and 2) Roman. The argument for this is that the Thracian heritage is very different from the Roman one in nature, and on the other hand it is distinctive for Bulgaria (unique) and therefore should not be confused with the Roman one, which is represented in many European countries and the Mediterranean.

In many cases the types could be further subdivided. For example the architectural and artistic attractions include houses, public buildings, streets, squares, quarters, traditional settlements, palaces and castles, bridges, fountains, aqueducts etc. Museums and galleries include museums, museum collections, waxwork expositions, open air museums, panoramas, art galleries. In addition, depending of the thematic scope museums may be historical, archeological, ethnographic, artistic, technical, scientific, etc.

Other particularly important (critical) criteria seem to be:

Property ownership - public (state, municipal), denominations, non-profit organizations, private;

Organizational accessibility - free access, with entry fee, with permission (restricted access), without public access;

Grouping, integration (in terms of attractions spatial scope and structure) - single and group attractions

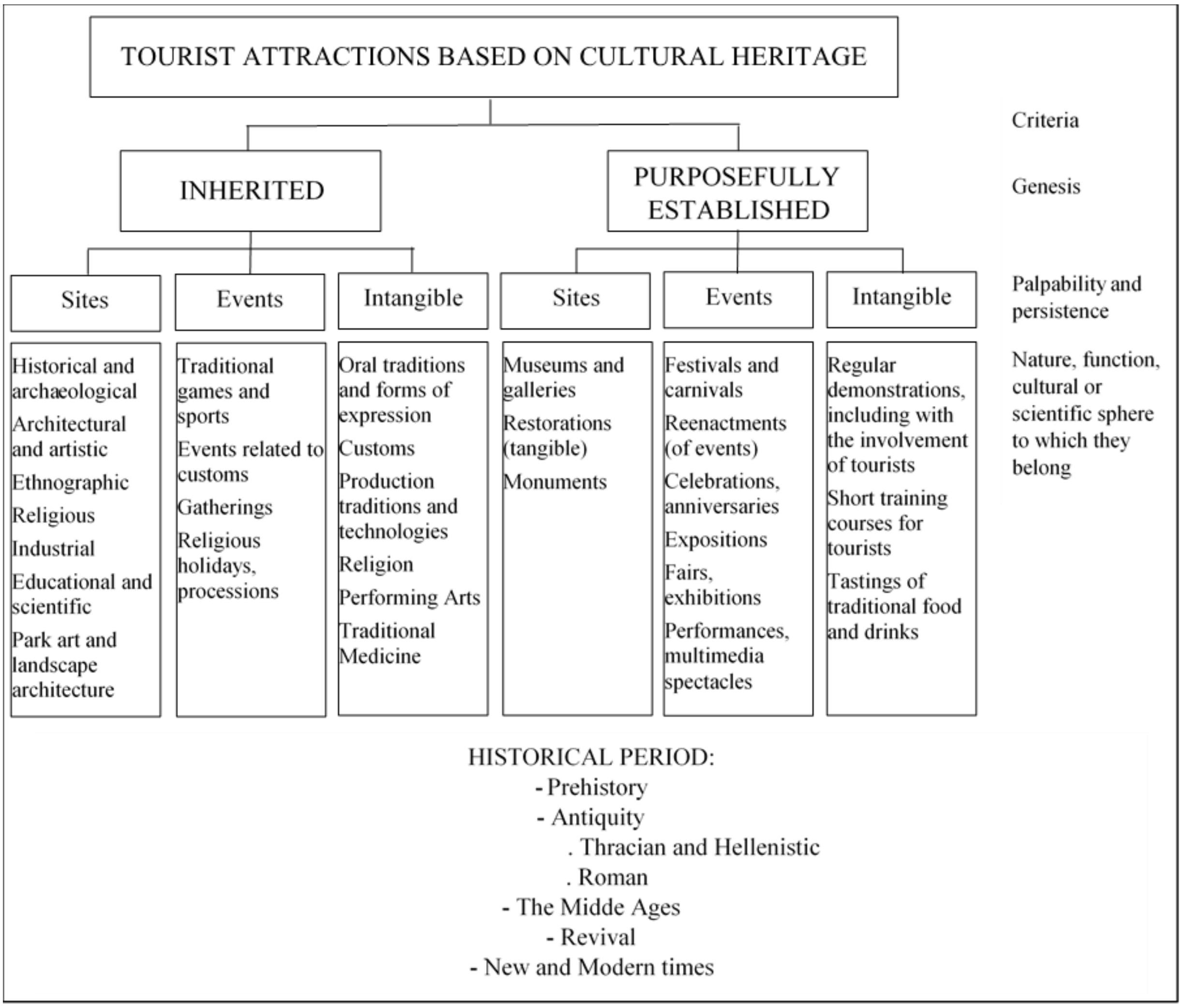
Localization (type of environment) – in the settlement or outside;

Spatial structure - point, linear and areal;

Tourist visit organization - organized and unorganized;

Catchment area – global, national, regional. local

**Figure 2.** Principal typology of tourist attractions based on cultural heritage




Source. Authors' research

The typology was applied and tested on the basis of the sites included in the field survey. The attractions under study were assigned to the respective types and periods (as in Figure 2) and were classified also by the criteria grouping/integration and localization/type of environment. The existing classification in the different registers of cultural heritage was considered when appropriate. The approbation indicates that the typology is applicable and feasible, allowing to assign each site to a type reflecting its features. Furthermore, it was applied by the processing and analysis of the data collected, allowing to identify specific features of each type, incl. the differences in their rating by visitors.

The greatest challenge was the extraordinary variety of individual attractions and situations.The approbation revealed that it is practically impossible to achieve a uniform assignment of a significant part of the sites (attractions) to only one type by the criterion "nature/function/cultural or scientific area". For example the church "Holy Forty Martyrs" is classified as historical and archeological site (as it relates to important personalities and events), as architectural and artistic site (due to the building itself and the preserved frescoes) and as a religious site (as the purpose of visit in many cases is religious). The same is valid for the historical periods, especially in the case of museums – their expositions typically cover several, if not all, periods. Obviously, it is inevitable that an applied typology will have to accept a compromise and allow for assignment to several types, but it is nevertheless important to take into account the dominant characteristics in terms of tourism, respectively of tourists' perceptions.

The structure of the attractions studied by types is presented in Table 1 and is correlated with the commonly used classification according to the contemporary function of the sites to emphasize on the difference and to indicate the frequency of overlapping between types. The survey was able to cover six out of ten types of sites according to their nature, function and scientific or cultural sphere to which they belong, and indirectly two of the types related to intangible heritage (regular demonstrations and training courses for tourists). 67% of attractions are endowed and 33% - purposefully established, 74% are urban and 26% - extra-urban, 73% are single and 27% - grouped.

**Table 1.** Structure of attractions by type according to their nature, function and scientific or cultural sphere to which they belong

| | Attractions studied | Historical and archeological | Architectural and artistic | Ethnographic | Religious | Museums and galleries | Monuments | Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number | 47 | 24 | 27 | 6 | 6 | 26 | 3 | 92 |
| Share, % | | 26% | 29% | 7% | 7% | 28% | 3% | 100% |
| By main function, number | | | | | | | | Av. Nr |
| Architectural and historic preserve | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2.4 |
| Archeological preserve | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1.8 |
| Ethnographic complex | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2.7 |
| Museum house | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2.6 |
| Museum | 17 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 1.4 |
| Art gallery | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1.0 |
| Church | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2.3 |
| Monastery | 3 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2.7 |
| Temple complex, tomb | 3 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.7 |
| Monument/memorial | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2.7 |

* The total is bigger than the the sum of sites as many sites are assigned to more than one type
Source. Authors' research

The work with the registers identified several existing gaps that are relevant to the typology of cultural heritage attractions and its application. First of all, they are not integrated and user-friendly (e.g. the register of cultural values with national and global significance consists of 28 "regional" Excel files that have to be downloaded and often to be read in full to check the statute and classification of a single site). Quite often sites appear with different names in different registers, or the names in the registers differ from the name (popular or official) by which they are known to the public and are promoted as attractions.

Another problematic moment is the typology of the sites according to their spatial form and scope or their grouping (single and group sites). The Ministry of Culture's registers allow for "double counting of sites" which is neglected when presenting quantitative data on cultural heritage. On the one hand, there is a large number of cultural values (of national importance) that are declared as single sites, on the other, they are included within the scope of a group site. In this sense, the list of cultural values of national importance overestimates the "quantity" of potential or real tourist attractions from the perspective of the tourist who perceives the group site as a single unit (e.g. the village of Arbanassi, and not 48 separate houses and churches; the medieval fortified quarter Trapezitsa, and not 18 separate churches or fortifications, etc.).

**Conclusions and implications**

The research resulted with the elaboration of a workable definition of a "tourist attraction" and practically applicable typology of cultural heritage attractions to be used by the public bodies which is in compliance with the existing legislation in Bulgaria regarding culture and cultural heritage in terms of terminology and types of cultural heritage. Nearly fifty cultural heritage attractions have been studied not only to test and verify the typology, but to provide a detailed picture of the features of, demand for and management issues and gaps of different types of heritage attractions based on a unified methodology which are subject of further publication.

The typology of cultural heritage attractions seems particularly important in terms of establishing a common understanding and common 'language' of different fields of study and of different policies that place different emphasis and priorities - on the one hand cultural (first of all research and conservation, but also socialization in the broadest sense), on the other hand, tourism and related regional policy in terms of funding (first of all utilization and benefit generation, especially economic, without neglecting protection). The misunderstanding and even conflict between these two policies has very often been particularly visible not only in Bulgaria but in other countries as well.

The proposed typology will facilitate the coordinated efforts of different institutions on national and local level needed to improve the legislation and strategies for cultural heritage development for tourism purposes and will be an argument for the need of national scientific programs on specific issues of public interest.

**Acknowledge**

The research is carried out in 2019 within the National scientific program "Cultural heritage, national memory and public development", funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, in which Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" is a leading partner.

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# COMMUNITY ROLES AND ATTITUDES IN VUCA WORLD

# MEASURING THE IMPACTS OF MEDIUM SIZED REGIONAL SPORT EVENTS – WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE COMMUNITY AND CAN THEY CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF A TOURIST DESTINATION?

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***ABSTRACT***

*The paper presents empirical evidence on the socioeconomic impact of two medium sized regional multisport events in Greece (Epidavros Action 2018 and POROSEA 2019). Findings suggest that such events not only can be a significant economic stimulus of which the local communities may benefit directly and indirectly in various ways. Compared to international ("mega") events, where usually the overall effects are much bigger, they appear to be favorable, especially as the costs of organization and infrastructure as well as negative externalities (incl. crowding-out effects) are disproportionately smaller. Being appropriately integrated into the destination-marketing strategy and given the support and the involvement of the local community and the various stakeholders it can also significantly contribute to prosperity and sustainable development of a touristic destination.*

*However, socio-economic effects of sport events do not take place automatically. Therefore, a profound understanding of the theoretical peculiarities of the field is crucial. The focus of this paper consequently lies on raising awareness of the tourism and events managements many special characteristics and on how to implement that knowledge in order to leverage the event-induced tourism development. Finally, the Logic Model provides a conceptual framework connecting impacts with outcomes, outputs, inputs, activities and resources is the logic model. Breaking down the conceptualization and evaluation process of an event into those categories can create a meaningful planning and communication model that helps to stay focused on the goals of an event and to tell the story of the performance to the stakeholder. It thereby contributes to make events more meaningful as an experience, as a task and as an intervention.*

**Keywords:** *Sport events; Socio-economic impacts; Tourism development; Sustainability; Logic Model*

## Introduction

Event-induced tourism has been widely studied with respect to sporting mega-events such as the Summer Olympic Games and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup (Kaiser et al. 2013, 33). According to Blake (2005) the economic impact varies at each location across city, region and country and the impact is in part inversely dependent on the current status of the destination as a tourist resort – established tourist destinations have proportionately less to gain than less established ones. Furthermore, their various stakeholders see events controversially. Event opponents usually emphasize the fact that they may bring "fresh" money into the local and/or regional economy, which then leads to jobs, additional income, and taxes. In addition, potential (positive) image effects as well as influences on urban development and modernization are mentioned repeatedly. Event opponents again come up with an inefficient use of taxpayers' money, typically overhasty planning, and decision-making, as well as high opportunity costs.

Socioeconomic impacts of big ("mega") events have been studied time and again. However, the current state of research is highly heterogeneous and there still is a strong focus on the (tangible) economic effects. Small and medium size regional sport events and their various effect as well as challenges and opportunities in contrast hitherto did not receive much research attention. This is even more surprising as they appear to be favorable to large international ("mega") events regarding the prospects of sustainable development of tourist destinations: Although their overall effects usually are much smaller, the costs of organization and infrastructure as well as negative externalities (incl. crowding-out effects) typically are disproportionately smaller. It is suggested that medium sized regional sport events not only can be a significant economic stimulus of which the local communities may benefit directly and indirectly in various ways. Being appropriately integrated into the destination-marketing strategy and given the support and the involvement of the local community and the various stakeholders they can also significantly contribute to prosperity and sustainable development of a touristic destination. Drawing on the example of two medium sized regional multisport events in Greece (Epidavros Action 2018 and POROSEA 2019) the paper raises the question if and how local communities may benefit from the organization and hosting of such events. An overview of the results of both quantitative and qualitative research methods is given and implications for sustainable tourism development are critically discussed.

As research suggests desired socio-economic effects of sport events do not take place automatically (Kaiser et al. 2013). Therefore, a profound understanding of the theoretical peculiarities of the field is crucial. The main focus of this paper consequently lies on raising awareness of the tourism and events managements many special characteristics and on how to implement that knowledge in order to leverage the event-induced tourism development (Kaiser et al. 2013, 34).

## Theoretical framework

Events Management is not a coherent academic field of research and study, and a generic and comprehensive theory of events management does not yet exist. One of the basic problems regarding theory construction and modelling in events management certainly is the ambiguity in the use of the term „event"; there is little agreement on standardized categories so far. This lack of conceptual clarity is due to the mere fact that its perception contains diverse contextualization and implications from several disciplines (sociology, economy, psychology, cultural studies, communication science etc., Kaiser 2014). Moreover, events occur "throughout all sections of society and across all different types of organisations" (Berridge 2007, 5). The event sector is thus not one coherent sector but many different sectors (Goldblatt 2000, 3) including a wide range of different types of events, like conferences/meetings, exhibitions, incentive travel, festivals, corporate hospitality and their associated organisations, such as events management companies, events industry suppliers, venues, industry associations etc. (ibid., Beech, Kaiser & Kaspar 2014).

To understand the peculiarities and to be able to respond appropriately to leverage opportunities of sustainable destinations development optimally, a wide theoretical framework is necessary. Simply transferring methods and approaches from common marketing theory is not suited to meeting the requirements of the tourism and events managements many special characteristics (Kaiser et al. 2013, 35). To identify those relevant characteristics, theories and bodies of knowledge from various fields seem to be helpful.

First, the theory of service management provides knowledge needed to understand the production and consumption process of services (e.g. Levitt 1981, Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985). In contrast to material goods, services are of an intangible nature. They should be provided independently from their utilisation, in close spatial and timely contact with the customer ("uno-actu principle", temporal concurrence of performance creation and performance consumption). The consumer is integrated into the production process of the service. This constitutes an essential difference to the production process of material goods (Kaiser et al. 2013). The particular challenge here lies in the fact that important and quality-affecting aspects can only be controlled by the provider (event organizer, destination management organization/ DMO) in a limited way, since aspects like timing, quality and quantity of the demand can only be estimated ahead of time based on previous experiences. This results in a high degree of uncertainty in decision-making on the supply side as well as the demand side, since it is difficult to predict the conditions and characteristics of the service ahead of time (Bleuel & Patton 1978, Fitzsimmons 2011).

From an economic perspective, special challenges for the management and marketing of sport and tourism services arise from the necessity of coproduction by the demanders and the suppliers, as well as mutual uncertainty about the motivation and the performance of the parties involved in the market (Kaiser et al. 2013). Tourists typically demand for a variety of goods and services, which can only be provided by several different suppliers. Whereas usually the collaboration of competing suppliers is only one option amongst others, in tourism it is an almost mandatory pre-condition ("coopetiton", e.g. Woratschek et al. 2003). In this context another useful theoretical approach is the idea of destinations being value added chains or "virtual companies" (Sydow, 2006). The central special characteristic of the added value in service networks is the fact that the quality of a single member of the network affects the total quality (Siller, 2010, 78, Bieger, 2008, see also Kaiser et al. 2013). Virtual companies are company networks that operate closely together on the basis of shared resources and keep up a close cooperation, subsequently needing a common strategic plan to build up and develop the shared resources like core competencies (Bieger 2008). So, the cooperation between different suppliers from different branches, for example, hotels, gastronomy, public transportation, golf courses etc., as well as the cooperation between suppliers form the same branch is necessary. Only if the destination attracts enough tourists is it possible to divide the revenue potential of the tourists among the different branches and the different competitors within the branches (see also Kaiser et al. 2013).

The connection between service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and economic success can be analysed in service-value-added chains. According to the Service Profit Chain (SPC, Heskett et al., 1997), there is a direct economic connection between extra-ordinary service experiences, customer loyalty, and economic success in terms of profit and growth. In the SPC it is generally argued that employee satisfaction positively affects service quality and that a high level of service quality leads to customer satisfaction. A high level of customer satisfaction is a prerequisite for customer loyalty and leads to a higher likelihood that the customers will recommend the supplier to other potential customers (see also Kaiser et al. 2013). The connection between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty generally depends on the number of choices a customer has. In low competition markets, a higher level of customer loyalty is generally achieved, even though customer satisfaction is lower. The competition in the tourism industry is high and rising. Further, it is not regionally confined since tourism destinations have been competing for guests worldwide. Regarding the demand for sport and tourism services furthermore a decay of gratification is especially common (Bänsch 1995, Tscheulin 1994): Often a key motive for traveling is experiencing and seeing new destinations and places on every vacation ("variety seeking"). This has a number of consequences (cf. Kaiser et al. 2013, 36). First, normal levels of customer satisfaction lead to a relatively low customer loyalty when compared to less competitive markets. Secondly, it can be assumed that specifically in endurance sports events, as in the present case, the pursuit of change in the sense of the before-mentioned variety seeking has a special importance: The variety of spots (and related challenges) is probably one of the central motives in choosing the destination. In comparison to other sports or sport vacations, where the infrastructural conditions are less important, running, swimming and/or cycling in different areas is an important stimulus. Accordingly, the specific local conditions and circumstances become a basic part of the experience. This is not the case in other sports (the main function of a tennis court is to enable the competition between two parties, whereas its configuration is standardised aso.). As a consequence of this variety-seeking, even highly satisfied customers may not return, which complicates the prospects of creating customer loyalty even more (ibid.).

Thirdly, a focus on the resources available to organisations, in this context particularly municipalities and tourism destinations, is important. In contrast to general economic theory, which tries to explain a company's economic success based on the structure of the market, the degree of supplier concentration, the level of product differentiation and the size of entry barriers into the industry or the market (e.g. Jong & Shepherd 2007), the resource-based view (RBV) sees the organisation's configuration of resources as the basis for entrepreneurial success and the creation of a long-term competitive edge (e.g. Mahoney & Pandian 1992). Here, network resources as well as resource knowledge are of especially high relevance (Penrose 1959, Wernerfelt 1984, Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Not least, within the chosen research context, (intangible) image resources, like the ones that can be generated by hosting a sport event, play a central role. Core resources, tangible and intangible, are available for the population in the form of public goods (Samuelson 1954).

Finally, as events are embedded in and subject to social change, they are in this regard modern forms of social representation and hence constitute new ways of social interaction and communication. Therefore, looking at fundamental social theories seems to be promising. Getz states that event management should be rooted in social science in general:

*"I have argued that event studies fits best into the social sciences, mainly because of its heavy reliance to the human and behavioural disciplines, but it also is eclectic in drawing from arts, sciences, engineering and design – really any other areas of study can offer something of value"* (2010, 352).

A theory that tries to explain this idea of people interacting through symbolic behavior and to form meaning through symbolic interaction, is symbolic interactionism. It has been around for several decades, rooted in the work of Georg Herbert Mead (1910) and developed by Herbert Blumer (1969). But also, in recent years there have been publications in the field of management that specifically refer to that theory (e.g. Flint 2006). Dionysiou and Tsoukas (2013) recently published an article with a focus on a symbolic interactionist perspective on organizational routines in the Academy of Management Review. Applying its focus to our object of cognition means getting familiar with the idea that events are social interactions about the meaning of a certain thing. That is because "humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things" (Blumer 1969). And it is not only about the meaning which people already connect with a thing: "The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society" Furthermore there is a certain handling of the meanings: "These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters" (ibid.). In this context an event is a purposefully conducted action that is aimed to create a space where different people can express and align their perceived meaning of a certain thing. The challenge for events management then is centred on the question how to set up those situations and create spaces of purposeful interactions. Proceeding the approach needs to shift from descriptive theoretical base to an action-oriented management approach. To achieve that we will introduce the concept of logic models as a tool to transfer the results of the application of the theory into a starting point for the management of socio-economic event-effects.

## Methods

The research project that serves as an example here is part of a long-term and vital collaboration between the Greek municipalities of Epidaurus and Poros and Heilbronn University/Germany (Prof. Kaiser-Jovy), seeking to examine alternative modes of sustainable touristic, economic and cultural development for the wider Argolis region and the Peloponnese. This includes seeking new ways to expand its touristic period by developing unique sports activities around its well-known historic monuments. Epidavros Action and POROSEA are both regional two days multisport events taking place in Ancient Epidaurus and Poros. The main race is the endurance category, an extreme triathlon with 2k sea swimming, 95k biking on the surrounding mountains and 21k trail running. In September 2018 (Epidavros Action) and June 2019 (POROSEA) athletes/event participants as well as accompanying persons have been asked by means of a standardized questionnaire about their perception of the two events as well as about their consumer behavior (N=506). Following Preuss (2004), to assess the economic impact of the two events, the research focus had to be put on new money injected into a host economy by people from outside the local economy. Thus, only those persons have been considered, who came because of the event, not calculating expenditure from (a) residents and (b) visitors who are there anyway and (c) people who "time switched" a vacation. Due to the small and regional character of the events, lost revenues due to people (a) leaving the city/region because of the events or (b) don't come because of the event at all, could be neglected.

Furthermore, the assessment of social as well as community (intangible) impacts has been conducted by means of qualitative interviews with different community stakeholders (N=12). The selection of the experts interviewed has been undertaken by means of expert sampling (a. o. Patton 1990). This method of sampling involves persons with known or demonstrable experience and expertise in the field. Expert sampling is a subcategory of purposive sampling where sampling for proportionality is not the main objective. However purposive sampling allows to include a wide range of stakeholders covering extreme or deviant views and perspectives, being very useful in the context of an explorative research design. To get a broad picture of the tourist marketing activities and their determining factors in the respective destinations, experts were interviewed from the fields of politics, sports and tourism management. The interviewees were in all cases key decision makers in their respective area of competence and influence.

**Results**

According to the research the Epidavros Action event generated a direct turnover of approx. 150.000 EUR on the race weekend, and this is only the so called "primary impulse", excluding multiplier effects (future investments) as well as all indirect/long-term and marketing effects (POROSEA: approx. 275.000 EUR). Not least, it brought almost 1.000 people (athletes and visitors) to Epidaurus (POROSEA: 1.500), who would not have been there without the event. This led to a full use of hotel capacity in both cases and thus not least raised interest in the regions various cultural and historic spots. The qualitative interviews suggest that in both cases the events had a strong and positive impact on social cohesion in their respective communities, mainly due to the deliberate and strategic involvement of volunteers from different age groups and backgrounds. The findings suggest that medium sized regional sport events not only can be a significant economic stimulus of which the local community may benefit directly and indirectly in various ways. Compared to international ("mega") events, where usually the overall effects are much bigger, they appear to be favorable, especially as the costs of organization and infrastructure as well as negative externalities (incl. crowding-out effects) are disproportionately smaller. Being appropriately integrated into the destination-marketing strategy and given the support and the involvement of the local community and the various stakeholders it can also significantly contribute to prosperity and sustainable development of a touristic destination.

The research projects provide a comprehensive socio-economic picture of the socioeconomic impacts of medium sized sport events on touristic destinations. Wisely used in terms of a comprehensive destination development strategy such events may lead to visitors prolonging their stay, bringing more people with them and thus also raise interest in the region's tourist and cultural offerings. This leverages the socio-economic impact, not least by helping to shorten quiet/"off peak" periods. Further internationalization of the Epidavros Action regarding both athletes and volunteers will not only help to communicate the positive perception of the event but also raise interest about the community and the region.

The research project represents an innovative holistic approach to analysing socioeconomic impacts of sport and culture events. Taking the example of their various social, economic and tourist parameters as well as their synergies the research project shows new ways of exploiting tangible and intangible cultural heritage and thus may raise awareness of a wide range of social references and implications of medium-sized regional events. In this way, it both contributes at preserving cultural heritage as well as to facilitate the development of new and sustainable tourism and business opportunities. The project points towards long-term research prospects, as it is particularly well compatible with further programs of the European research area.

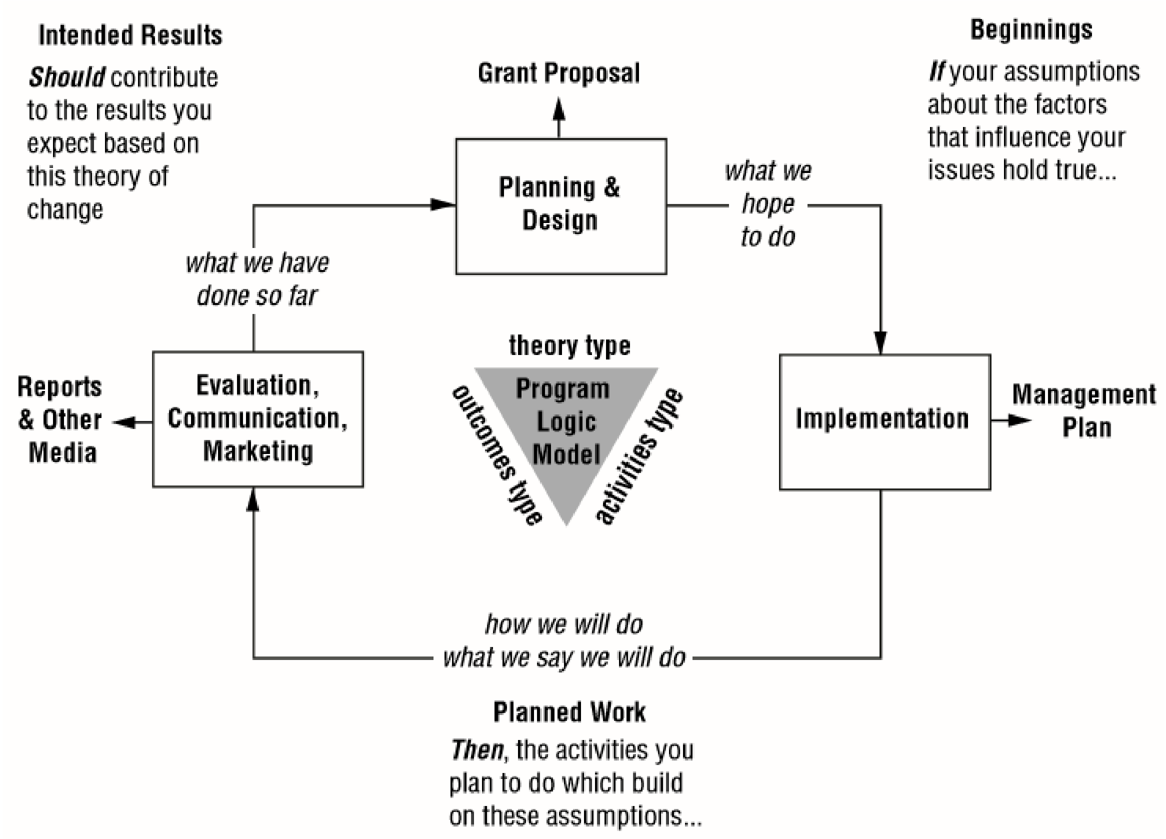
**Implications**

Apparently the first obvious consideration in events management has to be: what is the event about? But that question is not easily to be answered. To a professional football player, the purpose of a football match is to find out which is the better team. But are football players the most important stakeholders of a professional football match? To the general spectator of a football match it is mostly entertainment. For the fans it is about the team they root for and for the club it is about success (athletic and financial). This example shows how hard it is to define the "thing". Once the intent is figured out the question arises in which way the perceived meaning shall be influenced. Even an event that is focused on discussion or debate or the introduction of new ideas (like an academic conference) has a common meaning to the contributors. They commonly agree on the importance of the general topic.

The real purpose of an event, however, is to set up a situation (environment) where it is possible for all stakeholders to concentrate on the alignment of the meaning the thing has to them. All examples of extremely successful events show that there is an underlying premise that has nothing to do with the technical or measurable aspects. Events also produce different meanings for all kinds of stakeholders. They are meaningful to attendees – which usually is superficial the intention. But they can also be meaningful to sponsors, the common good, staff and associates etc. The meaning to those groups can be qualified by the impact the event has on the experience, the work, the status, the public perception etc.

We argue that events are all about meaning. Depending on what kind of stakeholder the focus lies meanings can vary. To structure and communicate about the different meanings an event has to certain stakeholders a model is needed to systematically display those meanings. As meanings don't qualify as goals the overall goals/intentions of an event should be described in terms of outcomes and/or impacts. A model that connects impacts with outcomes, outputs, inputs, activities and resources is the logic model. Breaking down the conceptualization and evaluation process of an event into those categories can create a meaningful planning and communication model that helps to stay focused on the goals of an event and to tell the story of the performance to the stakeholder. It thereby helps to make events more meaningful as an experience, as a task, as an intervention, as a job in terms of motivation, ideology and collaboration. The following graphic exemplifies the basic types of logic models.

**Figure 1.** Types of Logic Models

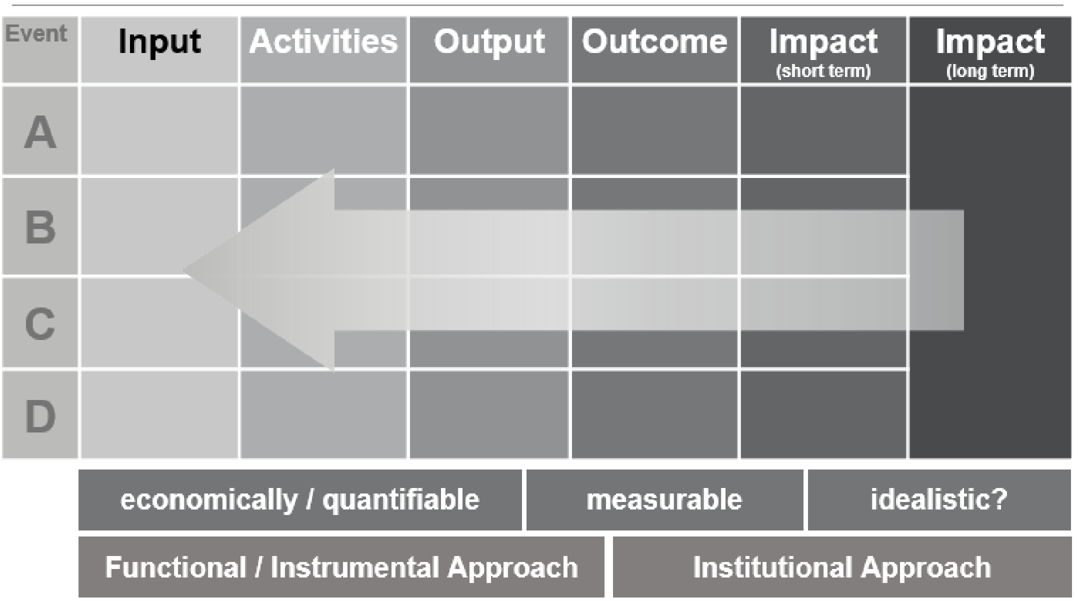



Source: W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2004, 11)

To achieve intended socio-economic effects, the focus should be directed to the intended impact before one starts thinking about tools and methods. Impact however is hard to translate into numbers and therefore hard to measure. In consequence it is hard to define the intended impact as a goal. That's probably why event goals are often set by measurable indicators that capture the original intent indirectly, if at all. That bears the question: how can the management of events address the issue of formulating the impact and integrate it in a notion of an overall approach of events management? A promising approach to achieve that could be the so-called Logic Model. It has it roots in the field of program evaluation of university (study and research) programs and has been extended to other fields of strategic planning and evaluation (e.g. McLaughlin & Jordan (2010).

*"Before designing a program, it is important to understand what the program is intended to accomplish [...]. Logic models describe the thinking behind the operation of a program and can be thought of as a series of "if-then" statements linking program resources, activities and outcomes"* (Olson 2014, 27/28).

**Figure 2.** Logic Model Development Guide




Source: Own illustration, following McLaughlin, J. A., Jordan, G. B. (2010)

According to the W. K. Kellogg Foundations' Logic Model Development Guide (2004, 4) the central elements can be further described as follows:

1. *Resources* include the human, financial, organizational, and community resources a program has available to direct toward doing the work. Sometimes this component is referred to as Inputs.

2. Program *Activities* are what the program does with the resources. Activities are the processes, tools, events, technology, and actions that are an intentional part of the program implementation. These interventions are used to bring about the intended program changes or results.

3. *Outputs* are the direct products of program activities and may include types, levels and targets of services to be delivered by the program.

4. *Outcomes* are the specific changes in program participants' behavior, knowledge, skills, status and level of functioning. Short-term outcomes should be attainable within 1 to 3 years, while longer-term outcomes should be achievable within a 4 to 6 year timeframe. The logical progression from short-term to long-term outcomes should be reflected in impact occurring within about 7 to 10 years.

5. *Impact* is the fundamental intended or unintended change occurring in organizations, communities, or systems because of program activities within 7 to 10 years. In the cur- rent model of WKKF grant making and evaluation, impact often occurs after the conclusion of project funding.

Logic models describe the path how the manager is planning and communicating toward that impact. That is where the two models meet and probably a good starting point for the process of managing an event. Starting with the impact and the knowledge of how impact can be socially created and which structure can be used to unfold that process an event manager is much better equipped to handle the task as one that only knows the regular tools of project management and at best has imprecise feeling about underlying assumptions.

In summary it can be said that this is what events management is about: The ability to analyze what is the important interactive benefit for the stakeholders. And based on that to be able to create an environment where that benefit is best provided.

To create such an environment, it is mandatory that at some point management methods and instruments are applied. But there is no standard set of tools when it comes to such diverse situations as they occur when managing events. However, to structure the processes and the implied connections between cause and effect a logic model can be a very good method to start with. Probably many event managers would agree to the statement that the job of managing events involves a lot of improvisation. But isn't that just a confession that the tools and techniques that they are trained in, displaying a functional canon of the field, are often not applicable? Tools, techniques, and methods cannot be the starting point of a theory of events management. They need to be selected according to the intended impact.

Summarizing, to structure and communicate about the different meanings an event should certain stakeholders a model is needed to systematically display those meanings. As meanings do not qualify as goals the overall goals/intentions of an event should be described in terms of outcomes and/or impacts. A model that connects impacts with outcomes, outputs, inputs, activities and resources is the logic model. Breaking down the conceptualization and evaluation process of an event into those categories can create a meaningful planning and communication model that helps to stay focused on the goals of an event and to tell the story of the performance to the stakeholder. It thereby helps to make events more meaningful as an experience, as a task, as an intervention, and thus contribute to sustainable development of communities and regions.

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# RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM: A CASE OF CROATIAN URBAN DESTINATIONS

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***ABSTRACT***

*As a global phenomenon, tourism exerts various impacts on the environment and economy of the locations in which it takes place. The impact of resident and tourist interaction on destination choice is significant as well. Recent studies underscore the connection between the following: the role that residents play, their attitudes towards the impact of tourism, the level of tourism development, the residents' involvement in tourism activities, seasonality, the ratio of residents and tourists, and types of tourists in a destination. These also indicate the local population's indifference about the involvement in destination management, which stems from the negative impact of politics on a destination, as well as from the influence of key stakeholders. The aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence the residents' attitudes toward the impact of tourism. This paper also determines the residents' satisfaction with current tourism development and the effects of tourism, presuming that they found its economic effects to be more important than its negative effects.*

*In the Republic of Croatia, tourism is highly developed only in the Adriatic, but not in the Continental part of the country. Therefore, this paper focuses on the residents' attitudes toward the impact of tourism in those two areas. It presents the results of research conducted with the residents of eight urban destinations in the Republic of Croatia (Adriatic and Continental Croatia). The survey, conducted in 2017, aimed at identifying factors that influenced the residents' attitudes towards the impact of tourism. For this purpose, a structured questionnaire was used. The obtained data were analysed using descriptive statistics.*

*The differences between residents' attitudes toward the impact of tourism are visible when speaking about tourism development level, current involvement, and plans for future inclusion in tourism destination offering. Residents are mostly satisfied with the effects of tourism, although they notice some negative effects as well. A higher tourism development level requires intensive involvement of the local population, and their role in destination management is even more important. Accordingly, residents should actively participate in tourism activities which aim to increase the tolerance threshold for tourist movements in destination and sustainable tourism. In this context, such involvement and behaviour should decrease certain negative effects of tourism. Therefore,* *research results are used to point out some aspects of destination management and involvement of residents aiming at relieving the pressure that tourism exerts on urban destinations and improving the quality of life and satisfaction of the local population.*

***Keywords:*** *impact of tourism; residents' attitudes; urban destinations; sustainable tourism*

## Introduction

The constant growth and development of tourism increasingly affect people's lives as well as the environment they live in (Gössling & Hall, 2006; UNWTO, 2014). Although tourism usually has positive effects for the residents, mainly because of its economic benefits, one cannot ignore its negative impact as tourist activities exert a certain amount of pressure on the environment in which they take place. Its negative aspects have developed during the period of mass tourism and transition from passive to active tourism, in which tourists actively consume natural and social resources, while simultaneously taking up more and more space. In this respect, it can be said that the adverse impact of tourism manifests itself through its expansion (it takes up a significant amount of space), aggressiveness (it penetrates protected, unexplored and undeveloped areas), and destructivity (it transforms, devalues and/or destroys the environment) (Črnjar & Črnjar, 2009: 40). Because these factors have greatly affected the lives of the residents and the development of certain areas (Bramwell, 2004; Navaro Jurado et al., 2013), it is now possible to discuss both positive and negative environmental, and socio-cultural economic impacts of tourism.

## The environmental impact of tourism

Although it does bring about some positive effects, the impact of tourism on the environment is mainly negative and is manifested through the following (Scott et al., 2012; UNEP, 2015): 1) the depletion of natural resources (such as water, sea, soil, fossil fuels, forests, etc.), 2) pollution (greenhouse gas emissions, waste disposal, discharges of wastewater, oil and chemicals, architectural or visual pollution, noise, etc.), and 3) physical impacts induced by tourism and tourist activities (the construction of tourism infrastructure and other capacities by taking up space by the sea, at sea and on land). At the beginning of the 21st century, tourism accounted for 5.3% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, 90% of which were caused by means of transport (Gössling, 2002). Air transport accounted for 3–3.5% of total GHG emissions, as well as for 2–3% of the total consumption of fossil fuels (Gössling, 2002; Mayor & Tol, 2008). Tourism was also responsible for about 5% of global $CO_2$ emissions, 75% of which were accounted for by means of transport (40% were caused by air, and 32% by road transport), and 25% by tourist capacities (UNWTO, UNEP & WMO, 2008). Recent studies show an increase in pollution levels, evidenced by an increase in GHG emission levels to 8% on a global scale between 2009 and 2013 (Lenzen et al., 2018). In 2000, the European Environment Agency (EEA) estimated that tourism contributed to 7% of all pollution in the Mediterranean, which placed an ever growing pressure on the environment and on natural resources, which were consumed 2.5 times faster than they regenerated (the global average being 1.5) (ARLEM, 2013). In the process, an average tourist used 3 – 4 times more water than an average resident of that area and generated more waste than a permanent resident (0.5 kg per tourist a day as opposed to 7 kg per resident a day). Over the past 20 years, tourism has caused electricity consumption in certain parts of the Mediterranean to rise by 208%, where in some areas 20 – 40% of total electric energy is being consumed by tourist activity, and in other areas the consumption doubles or triples during peak season (ARLEM, 2013). It is also important to highlight that tourism has caused the demolition of many traditional townscapes (Vehbi & Doratli, 2010), as well as deforestation (Kuvan, 2010) and the drainage of wetlands (ARLEM, 2013). This, in turn, has led to soil erosion, microclimate condition changes and ecosystem disruptions. However, the positive impacts of tourism are numerous as well. They regard raising consciousness about preservation, protection and improvement in the quality of natural environment, protecting and conserving natural and cultural heritage through tourism revenues, designating protected areas and protecting and preserving traditional building typology are just a few examples (Vehbi & Doratli, 2010). These factors make evident the complexity of managing tourism development with the purpose of mitigating adverse environmental impacts and sustainable development. Natural balance and preservation of resources that represent the greatest assets and attractions can easily be disrupted and destroyed, and the consequences may be irreversible.

### The socio-cultural impact of tourism

The socio-cultural impact of tourism refers to the effects of the tourists' stay at, movement within, and interaction with other tourists and the residents living in the destination community. The extent and direction of this impact on the local community both depend on the degree of tourist development of the destination, the current impact tourism exerts on it and the level of the residents' involvement in tourism (Krce Miočić et al., 2015). The effects of interactions between tourists and other stakeholders are seen both in the change of the local community's behaviour and the tourists' satisfaction with their experience. This interaction and the introduction of new values and patterns of behaviour bring about socio-cultural changes on both sides. Liu's (2003) literature review points out the harmfulness that the socio-cultural impact of tourism has on local communities. It gives rise to cultural uniformity, trivialises cultures and negatively affects the traditional ways of life of the local communities, while it simultaneously promotes modern values, social progress, and cultural evolution. Since travellers from developed countries generate most arrivals it can be said that tourism is strongly influenced by the Western culture. Because these cultures are socially, economically, and technologically developed, and characterised by materialism and mass consumption which greatly benefit the economic impacts of tourism, they are perceived as positive (Liu, 2003). However, materialism and mass consumption may also cause people to neglect their spiritual values, which are tightly linked with tradition, cultural identity, and integrity. This is how this behaviour contributes to globalisation and homogenisation of cultures to a certain extent. It is important to stress that it is the preservation of cultural heritage and maintenance of traditional values that provide a unique and authentic experience for tourists, while simultaneously reinforcing the cultural identity and integrity of the destination.

Previous research highlights the differences in the stakeholders' perception of the impact that tourism has on a local community. Sharpley (2014) claims that the overall attitude of local residents toward the impact of tourism depends on their opinions and attitudes about the profile of tourists that prevail or prevailed in a destination, as well as the characteristics of social relations resulting from the interaction with these tourists. Byrd et al. (2009a) conducted research with tourism stakeholders as participants and found that tourists and local government representatives fostered a positive attitude towards the impact of tourism, whereas local residents were dissatisfied with the increase in crime rates and property taxes that tourism brought about, as well as with the long-term negative effects it had on the environment. Still, local residents believed tourism to have a positive impact on their local economy, but to a much lesser extent than tourists do. Similar studies on the subject indicate that the perception of the positive impact of tourism is affected by the degree of economic dependence of the local community and their involvement in tourist activities, as well as by some demographic characteristics of residents and destination specificities (Deery et al., 2012). As for developing countries, Tosun (2000) found that the attitudes of local communities toward the impact of tourism are affected by both their involvement in tourism and certain cultural limitations. Destination specificities are also related to the degree of development of a tourist destination, which is why residents living in destinations with lower tourism development levels foster a positive attitude towards the impact of tourism. However, this attitude changes as the degree of development of a tourist destination increases (Byrd et al., 2009b). This confirms what Diedrich and García-Buades (2009) postulated – the attitudes toward the impact of tourism increase favourably until they reach a threshold, and then gradually become more negative. The more the community gains from tourism, the more it will support tourism activities and protect the environment, particularly its natural and cultural heritage. If it does not benefit from tourism development, it may become resentful and thus drive tourists away (Liu, 2003). Based on 140 studies that they analysed over the past 25 years, Nunkoo et al. (2013) compiled a list of key negative effects of tourism, which are as follows: traffic congestion, increased crime rates, and increased drug and alcohol abuse, all of which bring about other socio-economic problems.

### The economic impact of tourism

The economic impact of tourism is realised through its specific economic functions (Čavlek et al., 2011), and its effects are shown by certain economic indicators such as generated revenue, its contribution to GDP, the percentage of tourism sector employment in total employment, the tourism employee income, direct investments, etc. Some of these indicators are included within the scope of the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), a standard that measures the overall economic impact of tourism in the country (UNWTO, 2011). The most frequent methods used to calculate this impact on the economy are the multiplier effect analysis, the input-output analysis and the Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model, among others (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1998; Kim & Kim, 1998; Šutalo et al., 2011). In addition to these, there are other, more statistical indicators of physical economic effects such as the number of arrivals and overnight stays and carrying capacity utilisation and overload. The 2019 World Tourism Organisation report shows that tourism generates USD 5 billion a day in exports, and in 2018 alone international tourism exports totalled USD 1.7 trillion, or 7% of total global exports (UNWTO, 2019). In addition, every tenth person is employed in tourism (UNWTO, 2018), which indicates the importance of tourism in the global economy.

### Methodology and research results

The preliminary study of the attitudes and perceptions of the local population was conducted in May and June 2015 in Zadar.[13] The study conducted in Zadar was an experimental study which confirmed the research concept and methodology. The same study was then conducted on the local population in other cities in April and May 2016. This period was chosen because it is when cities, and this is especially true for coastal cities, are not facing peak tourism carrying capacity, as that can affect the attitudes and perceptions of the local population regarding the effect tourism has on their hometowns. The essential criteria for the selection of cities were their spatial extent and tourism development. A total of eight cities and towns across Croatia were selected in accordance with the NUTS 2 Regions (Adriatic Croatia and Continental Croatia), whereby four counties with the largest number of overnight stays from each region in 2015 were chosen. Afterwards, the

[13] The study was conducted for the purposes of a PhD thesis.

cities and towns with the largest number of overnight stays in the same year were selected from the counties. This selection encompassed urban destinations at different stages of tourism development since certain urban destinations in Continental Croatia are still in the stage of research and inclusion into tourism flows. This is true despite the relatively large number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays. It was thus necessary to take into consideration the urban destinations in Continental Croatia with the most developed tourism in order to avoid any potential research constraints. Urban destinations with the largest number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays were also selected, due to the fact that they are most vulnerable to the issues of tourism carrying capacity and sustainability, which are widespread in the cities and towns in Adriatic Croatia.

The respondents were randomly selected, that is, they completed the questionnaire willingly. A total of 1,102 respondents were included in the study in the following eight cities and towns: Karlovac (KA), Krapina (KR), Mali Lošinj (ML), Osijek (OS), Rovinj (RV), Split (ST), Varaždin (VŽ) and Zadar (ZD). The questionnaire for the local population consisted of a total of 35 close-ended and open-ended questions. Only the relevant questions were selected for the purposes of this paper. A Likert-type scale with points from -2 to +2 was used for the answers to close-ended questions.

The residents of the above-mentioned cities expressed their opinions by rating their urban destinations according to five basic elements. Certain parts demonstrate opposing views. More precisely, the residents of most cities are satisfied with the city as a tourist destination and with the benefits tourism brings to their hometowns. At the same time, however, underutilised tourism potentials and the activities of the local administrations were highlighted as basic restrictions for most cities. Respondents also noted that the tourism industry needed to improve the development of tourism in their respective destinations. The least satisfied residents are thus from Karlovac, followed by Osijek. The most satisfied are the residents of Krapina. Therefore, it can be said that residents believe that cities can and must work better for the development of tourism in their respective hometowns. This is especially true for municipal councils and investors working directly in tourism development.

**Table 1.** Resident satisfaction regarding tourism elements in their urban destinations

| Satisfaction rate elements | Karlovac | Krapina | Mali Lošinj | Osijek | Rovinj | Split | Varaždin | Zadar | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| City as a tourist generation in general | 0,29 | 1,47 | 1,25 | 0,54 | 1,19 | 1,26 | 1,44 | 1,17 | 1,09 |
| Benefits tourism brings to the city | -0,34 | 0,97 | 1,22 | 0,27 | 1,31 | 0,96 | 0,56 | 0,98 | 0,80 |
| Degree of utilisation of tourism potentials | -1,18 | 0,77 | 0,63 | -0,48 | 0,40 | 0,25 | 0,07 | 0,21 | 0,11 |
| Activities of local authorities working in tourism development | -1,11 | 1,05 | 0,48 | -0,53 | 0,19 | -0,37 | -0,14 | -0,04 | -0,09 |
| Activities of private investors working in tourism development | 0,01 | 1,11 | 0,66 | 0,27 | 0,73 | 0,38 | 0,12 | 0,31 | 0,42 |

Source: Author's data processing

The local populations participating in the survey expressed their opinions on the effects that tourism has on towns and cities they live in and on themselves. Overall, the largest number of respondents noticed a positive effect of tourism on their hometowns. However, a noticeably smaller number of respondents from Continental Croatia (Karlovac (33.7%), Osijek (28.8%), and Varaždin (28.3%), believe that tourism has an extremely positive effect on their home town in comparison to the respondents from cities and towns in Adriatic Croatia such as Rovinj (85.9%), Mali Lošinj (78.0%), Zadar (67.1%), and Split (60.8%). Among the cities and towns in Continental Croatia, however, residents of Krapina still see a positive effect of tourism on their hometown (75.9%). This can be interpreted by Krapina being an important location for youth fieldtrip tourism which is enabled through visits to the Krapina Neanderthal Museum, as well as through transit tourism which is not recorded in tourism statistics. Regarding the effects tourism has on the respondents themselves, the results are similar to the effects tourism has on the hometowns of the respondents. That is to say, respondents from Rovinj (63.9%) perceive the most positive effect of tourism on themselves personally, as is the case in Krapina (62.0%).

It should be noted that the random sample of respondents also included residents who are involved in tourism by renting their own accommodation, working in their own or other accommodation services, working in their own or other hospitality venues, or by providing some other tourist services. The number of respondents involved in providing different tourist services is greater in Adriatic cities and towns, especially in Rovinj (82.2%), followed by Mali Lošinj (54.4%), and Zadar (52.0%), where respondents also perceive a larger positive effect of tourism on their hometowns and families. Regarding destinations in Continental Croatia, Krapina (30.0%) shows a larger number of residents involved in tourism activities. This differs from Karlovac (7.1%), Osijek (6.4%), and Varaždin (5.0%). Results show that respondents who benefit directly from tourism have a more positive attitude towards the effects of tourism than respondents who are in no way directly involved in tourism. This leads to a total of 71.22% of residents who believe that tourism has an extremely positive effect on their hometowns, 55.95% on their families, and 54% on themselves. The above-mentioned results were also tested by the chi-square test which indicated with a 5% significance level that, taking into consideration the involvement of respondents in certain tourism activities, there are statistically significant differences in the opinions of residents on the effects of tourism on their families and on themselves.

Furthermore, respondents demonstrated their opinions regarding the possible involvement in tourism activities in the future in order to gain economic, socio-cultural, and ecological profit. Residents plan on becoming involved in tourism in different ways by which they can benefit themselves and contribute to the benefit of their local communities. Landscaping is one of the five most common activities in which most respondents would wish to participate. Adriatic cities emphasise the need to learn foreign languages, with Rovinj exhibiting the largest number of residents interested in engaging in tourism to a greater extent by investing into various tourism activities. It is necessary to take these and many other elements into account when creating and organising educational programmes intended to include and involve the local population into urban destination tourism more efficiently.

**Table 2.** Plans for involving residents in tourism in the future considering the current involvement of respondents in tourism

| Plans for becoming involved in tourism in the future | Currently NOT involved in tourism | Currently involved in tourism |
|---|---|---|
| Renting their own accommodation | 8.3% | 29.8% |
| Opening a family hotel | 1.2% | 3.0% |
| Opening some other form of accommodation | 1.8% | 5.7% |
| Opening a hospitality venue | 2.2% | 6.0% |
| Opening a store | 1.2% | 1.6% |
| Providing other tourism services | 4.2% | 14.0% |
| I am planning to become involved but unsure in what way | 19.1% | 20.0% |
| I am not planning on becoming involved in tourism | 51.8% | 13.5% |

Source: Author's data processing.

The research has also shown differences in residents' plans on becoming involved in tourism in the future regarding the current involvement of respondents in tourism. In half of the cases, results indicate that there are significant differences regarding the respondents' future planned tourism activities considering their current involvement in tourism. Respondents who are somehow already involved in tourism wish to become more involved because they see additional benefit. The above-mentioned results were also tested by the chi-square test which indicated with a 5% significance level that, taking into consideration the involvement of respondents in tourism, there are statistically significant differences in the opinions of residents on future tourism activities. Results show that respondents are more interested in becoming involved in tourism by renting their own accommodation and by opening family hotels or some other type of accommodation. Also, results point towards residents being significantly interested in providing other tourism services.

**Table 3.** Resident opinions on the negative effects of tourism on their hometowns

| Problem present in the city | Karlovac | Krapina | Mali Lošinj | Osijek | Rovinj | Split | Varaždin | Zadar | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Noise, especially during the night | 18.9% | 0.0% | 13.2% | 16.7% | 21.0% | 44.5% | 6.1% | 40.8% | 25.1% |
| Crowds | 7.8% | 13.3% | 31.6% | 17.4% | 51.9% | 70.6% | 7.2% | 71.5% | 42.3% |
| Traffic problems | 13.5% | 30.8% | 39.7% | 23.7% | 72.6% | 82.0% | 15.2% | 69.6% | 50.0% |
| Shortage of parking spaces | 24.7% | 36.7% | 57.3% | 48.2% | 75.7% | 86.7% | 20.6% | 75.6% | 59.6% |
| Arrival of other religions and cultures | 2.2% | 1.3% | 4.4% | 5.2% | 5.8% | 7.3% | 2.1% | 7.3% | 5.1% |
| Increase in prostitution | 4.4% | 0.0% | 5.3% | 3.5% | 7.8% | 9.8% | 1.0% | 10.5% | 6.4% |
| Drugs and crime | 14.4% | 0.0% | 8.7% | 14.8% | 16.0% | 29.3% | 11.2% | 35.0% | 20.0% |
| Tourists behaving immorally | 8.9% | 0.0% | 5.1% | 5.3% | 16.2% | 24.4% | 3.1% | 16.8% | 12.0% |
| Locals behaving immorally | 14.6% | 0.0% | 12.2% | 8.7% | 7.6% | 13.9% | 0.0% | 21.4% | 11.9% |
| Higher land costs | 11.1% | 0.0% | 36.5% | 21.7% | 63.8% | 47.3% | 20.8% | 43.4% | 34.6% |
| Higher costs for renting accommodation and business premises | 16.9% | 12.8% | 51.7% | 24.6% | 69.8% | 60.8% | 22.4% | 54.4% | 43.8% |
| Increased cost of living | 23.1% | 10.3% | 56.9% | 36.8% | 71.4% | 59.5% | 23.7% | 62.8% | 48.4% |
| Environmental pollution | 20.0% | 5.4% | 14.5% | 13.9% | 26.7% | 57.3% | 20.6% | 27.6% | 26.3% |

Source: Author's data processing.

Residents are still aware of the potential negative effects that tourism can have on their towns. Environmental pollution stands out the most among potential problems since 40.8% of respondents believe that environmental pollution could become a problem for their hometowns in the future. Other problems are mostly related to increases in real-estate prices and higher costs of living. Potential problems relating to drug use, crime, and tourists behaving immorally are highlighted in Split which is a city known as a popular destination for younger generations. On a positive note, respondents from all cities are least concerned with the arrival of other religions and cultures, making the destinations open for tourism development.

**Table 4.** Opinions of residents regarding the negative effects of tourism considering the current involvement of the respondents in tourism

| Negative effects of tourism | Problem present in the city | | Potential problem in the city's future | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Currently NOT involved in tourism | Currently involved in tourism | Currently NOT involved in tourism | Currently involved in tourism |
| Noise, especially during the night | 25.0% | 28.4% | 18.6% | 24.4% |
| Crowds | 37.6% | 50.7% | 21.3% | 21.5% |
| Traffic problems | 45.9% | 58.3% | 24.1% | 21.3% |
| Shortage of parking spaces | 57.6% | 65.6% | 21.6% | 20.8% |
| Arrival of other religions and cultures | 5.0% | 6.1% | 21.8% | 18.9% |
| Increase in prostitution | 7.0% | 10.8% | 26.8% | 18.7% |
| Drugs and crime | 22.6% | 26.2% | 35.8% | 31.8% |
| Tourists behaving immorally | 11.7% | 15.9% | 28.9% | 32.9% |
| Locals behaving immorally | 13.4% | 13.9% | 29.9% | 33.0% |
| Higher land costs | 35.7% | 49.0% | 36.9% | 28.8% |
| Higher costs for renting accommodation and business premises | 43.1% | 57.8% | 35.6% | 26.3% |
| Increased cost of living | 45.4% | 59.6% | 29.8% | 26.6% |
| Environmental pollution | 24.5% | 32.3% | 46.2% | 39.0% |

Source: Author’s data processing.

*Table 4* shows that there are differences in resident opinions regarding the negative effects of tourism on their hometowns considering their current involvement in tourism. Although it was assumed that residents who directly benefit from certain tourism activities would be less critical towards the negative effects of tourism, results show that residents involved in tourism are more critical and more aware of the negative effects of tourism and of the problems currently present in their hometowns. This is also true for potential problems which might arise in the future. According to the values of the chi-square test with a 5% significance level, it is possible to conclude that statistically significant differences almost certainly exist in the opinions of residents regarding current and future negative effects of tourism in their hometowns, considering the involvement of respondents in tourism. Statistically significant differences regarding the negative effects of tourism on their hometowns, considering the current involvement of respondents in tourism, were found in all the mentioned categories, except in the categories “arrival of other religions and cultures”, “drugs and crime” and “locals behaving immorally”.

Despite the current and potential effects of tourism, the research results show that respondents wish to have more tourists in their hometowns. This is very pronounced in cities in Continental Croatia that have a smaller number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in comparison to the cities in Adriatic Croatia. Results from Mali Lošinj (48.7%) and Zadar (47.4%) are significant as they completely believe that more tourists are needed, however the question relates to their distribution throughout the year. The data shows that a certain number or respondents is considering different types of tourists. This is true for Karlovac, Mali Lošinj, Osijek, and Zadar. Krapina and Varaždin, however, are relatively content with the current tourist structure.

## Conclusion

During their stay in a tourist destination, tourists are under the cultural influence of the local population, and they contribute part of their culture through their behaviour in the destination. Tourism thus enables multicultural interaction as well as communication that must be balanced. The balance greatly depends on the tourism development level of the tourist destination. This is due to the fact that the development of tourism in a destination alters the views of the local population regarding the influence and consequences of tourism in the destination, as well as the behaviour of the tourists. Also, the balance depends on the identity and integrity of the local community which will protect its socio-cultural and all other values and resources. The local community thus retains its distinct features, thereby creating a unique experience for the tourists. Society and culture should then not remain closed off. Instead, they should leave enough room to be consumed to a degree that is not commercial. Overemphasising tourism turnover and the consumeristic component of tourism may cause an imbalance. This can in turn lead to slightly negative consequences of tourism, such as commercialisation and cultural homogenisation, dissatisfaction of the local population, and intolerance towards tourists.

To conclude, the attitudes of the local population regarding the effects of tourism on their hometowns is greatly influenced by the tourism development level of the given destination. A larger level leads to a more pronounced positive attitude regarding the effects of tourism on cities and families. However, the negative effects of tourism that are currently not noticed in destinations at a lower tourism development level are more pronounced as well. Such destinations demonstrate the need for a larger number and structure of tourists. More developed destinations are more cautious in this regard. They do not yet perceive the critical point of the tourism carrying capacity for the destination, although they still want a different type of tourists. A destination’s higher level of tourism development also leads to greater involvement of the local population. According to the data from Adriatic cities and towns, the majority of the population reaps some benefits from tourism. It is therefore sensible that their attitudes towards the effects of tourism are more positive. However, it is necessary to conduct continuous research on the satisfaction of the local population with the development of tourism. This is needed in order to recognize whether the destination has reached the critical point of socio-cultural and ecological overloads in time, and to take appropriate developmental measures.

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# THE BUBBLE SAVER: AN (UNINTENDED) EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF EXPERIENCE ECONOMY TO FURTHER PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

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**ABSTRACT**

*The theory and application of the principles of the experience economy are well rehearsed in the academic and industrial tourism-related literature since its introduction by Pine and Gilmore in 1998, and has of course also been utilised across a range of areas, from festivals to virtual reality. Indeed, even the higher education sector in much of the world seems to have embraced the experience economy of a means of recruiting, retaining, and ensuring that students have a positive experience. However, there has been a limited extant focus on how the experience economy can be applied in the policy arena, particularly in relation to public health initiatives and interventions whereby a variety of traditional, information-led educational, and more laterally nudge theory approaches, have been applied as a means to encourage behavioural change from tourists and residents.*

*This paper provides an overview of how the principles of the experience economy have been, intentionally or otherwise, applied to educate and mitigate risk taking behaviour and health outcomes amongst both tourists and residents. It considers both live and the increasing use of virtual experiences as a means of encouraging health-related behavioural outcomes. Analysis of a specific historical experience economy example, the "bubble saver," that utilised live and virtual realms amongst those who identify as gay male, trans and bisexual residents and visitors in Amsterdam during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s to evoke safer sex behavioural change will be provided.*

*In terms of methodology for this paper, an ethnographic approach was followed that involved interviews with those who developed and implemented the bubble saver experience economy-based intervention, as well as a review of the virtual footage available from the time.*

*This paper contributes to the broadening of the learning around the historical, sometimes accidental, yet highly influential activities that fall within the realms of the experience economy in the public health and policy arena for tourists and residents. The paper concludes by suggesting there is a clear opportunity to further develop, both within the literature and in practice, the application of experience economy-based activities to further policy outcomes, in this case those specific to health-related interventions.*

***Keywords:*** *Experience economy; public health; behaviour; risk*

## Introduction

This paper travels back through time and space to 1980s Amsterdam in The Netherlands, before the experience economy was called out as a post service economy development. And whilst the term experience economy had not yet been coined or the principles around it yet thought through and written down, core aspects of what we now refer to as the experience economy have of course been recognised for their utility both in part, and collectively prior. I hesitate to try and put a date to the collective nature of this as that would wrongly suggest a uniform model of economic and cultural development, and it is not the purpose of this paper. What this paper does attempt which presents a different sort of challenge is the incorporation of the principles of the experience economy as an added value into the field of public health, looking from the 1980s to the present day. An ethnographic approach was followed that involved interviews with those gay, trans and bisexual residents still alive who were resident in Amsterdam through the 1980s and 1990s, some of whom developed and implemented the bubble saver experience economy-based intervention, as well as a review of the analogue television footage available from the time. The bubble saver as a specific public health experience economy-related activity is called out and analysed, and a discussion of the wider, often tangential literature provided to suggest a different approach to behavioural change. This paper concludes that there are missed opportunities across health and other key policy areas by utilising the principles of the experience economy to inform and affect change.

## The Experience Economy Before There Was the Experience Economy

Pine and Gilmore's (2011) stages of adding economic value – agrarian, industrial, service, experience and transformational are well-rehearsed and generally accepted in the literature, although the transformational economy remains somewhat less grounded, yet. Nevertheless, it is seemingly accepted in the literature that the macroeconomic shifts they purport typically follow a linear pattern. Where the shades of grey come in is where the overlap between the macro environment occurs on a more micro scale. In other words, where the "service" and "experience" economies took place in an agrarian economy. Let me provide an example. In the first half of the 16$^{th}$ century in Ferrara, Italy Cristoforo di Messisbugo was a renowned cook and Master of Ceremonies in the House of Este. More to the point here, he was famous for his banquets which not only afforded guests a gastronomic/presentational experience, but he also orchestrated the décor, musical and theatrical performances to create a quality cultural spectacle for the audience unusual for the time – in other words "experience" in an agrarian economy. Perhaps now is a good time to briefly outline the key principles of the experience economy before moving into how it has been/can be applied in a public health context.

## Principles of the Experience Economy

I'm going to sum up the principles of how you "do" the experience economy, simply by stating, it is about giving people a good time (and in economic terms, how you extract money from them). Pine and Gilmore (2011) usefully outline their realms of experience, which make clear experience economy is not (just) about entertainment, rather it is about engagement. I realise this might sound somewhat contradictory in relation to my previous statement that experience economy is about giving people a good time, but I will clarify by outlining what I mean by a good time. For Pine and Gilmore (2011) a successful experience includes all four of what they refer to as experience realms: education, aesthetic, entertainment, and escapism. Within these there is also some degree of participation and immersion. This is a slight oversimplification, but their realms of experience model is well-rehearsed in the literature. However, what is also included within a successful experience are elements of surprise, the removal of "sacrifice" whereby sacrifice represents the gap between what someone will settle for, and what they want exactly (Harvard Business School 1999). Further key elements of the Pine and Gilmore's model include: consistency of theme, engaging all the senses, using positive cues, and incorporating the use of memorabilia (to reinforce memory). Referring back to my statement that "it is about giving people a good time," using these core principles, experience economy is ultimately about giving individuals a sense of belonging, which heightens positive emotions, and ultimately can put them a state which Csikszentmihalyi (1990) coined as "flow" where there's a sense of timelessness, and effortlessness that results in complete absorption with the activity/situation. Boswick et al (2006) build upon Pine and Gilmore's work to include Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow in their characteristics of meaningful experiences. It is commonly accepted that an experience is at its most meaningful when it is individualised, but this is not to say that groups cannot have meaningful experiences – in a group setting, where the same experiential conditions are set, individuals still interpret their experiences in a personal way. Indeed, it could be argued that the power of the group and shared experience is greater than that of an individual alone - this is important when we consider actions for behavioural change and health outcomes. Nevertheless, a key component of meaningful experiences is that they are memorable – that they leave an indelible impression on the individual. When the principles of the experience economy were developed, they focused on a "live" environment, as the technology that supports virtual and mixed reality environments was still in its infancy, although television was of course ubiquitous. What is less clear is how similar in terms of creating a sense of "virtual reality" television, and indeed radio before it, had at the time when compared to virtual or augmented reality that can be experienced today. In other words, was the "impact" on the individual any less from watching television in the 1980s, to that of someone with a virtual reality headset in 2019? This is a question I ca nnot directly answer.

However, there has been in recent years a digital dimension in terms of how health outcomes utilise virtual and mixed realities. Kim et al (2014) examine the impacts of interactive gaming to affect physical activity, finding that those who had "enjoyment" in the virtual world were more likely to report their intentions of changing their behaviour in the physical world. In other words, this supports the proposition that "having a good time" increases the incidence of behavioural change in positive health-related outcomes in the virtual world. Flavian et al (2019) provide a paper the focus of which is on the customer experience and developing a taxonomy of current experiential technologies. They also provide an overview of recent technological developments that impact on how we experience virtual and physical environments. The point here is that while original principles of the experience economy were developed in a pre-digital age, their efficacy is still relevant in virtual and mixed reality environments. Whether it is more so, or simply that we have adapted to the changes in technology and normalised them, is a question worthy of additional consideration.

Thus far, we have refreshed our understanding of the principles of experience economy, and how the conditions for meaningful experiences can be manufactured. Next, I'll discuss traditional approaches to behavioural change and health outcomes and move on to explore how the nexus of these and experience economy.

**Behavioural Change and Public Health Approaches**

Here I will rather briefly outline some of the traditional Westernised health-related approaches to changing behaviour. Let me say at the outset that my purpose is not to criticise them categorically, rather it is to provide some understanding and context for what will be proposed later in terms of how public health policy outcomes could be achieved in a different way. For those of us who have been involved with public health issues at a practical or policy level, or researched the health-related literature, the approach often feels a bit, well, clinical. And while the literature commonly and rightly puts a focus on the individual and personalised action, it generally feels, to me at least, quite transactional. As an example, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which issues guidance on behalf of the Department of *Health* in *the United Kingdom, has produced a public health guidance paper on Behaviour Change: Individual Approaches (2014). In this it defines what it means as a "Person-centred approach" as:* "Using a 'person-centred' approach, services work in collaboration with service users as equal partners to decide on the design and delivery of services. This approach considers people's needs and builds relationships with family members. It also considers their social, cultural, and economic context, motivation and skills, including any potential barriers they face to achieving and maintaining behaviour change. Person-centred care involves compassion, dignity and respect" (https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph49/chapter/glossary#behaviour-change-techniques-2). Without being glib and returning to the view that a meaningful experience derived from the principles of the experience economy is about "giving people a good time," the above definition feels somewhat sombre, and possibly a bit paternalistic. It is uninvolved to pull something out of what is a strategic document as part of a national framework and to then say, it does not look like much in the way of fun or supporting good times. But it is analogous to a review of the health-related literature on behaviour change. This is not to overly simplify the fact that behaviour is complex, and humans are not logical creatures, as anyone who has smoked a cigarette in the last 50 years, partaken of more than a single glass of wine of an evening, or eaten too much sugary food in the last week can attest. Much of the ways in which public health policy and practice has been geared to affect change is about information exchange, the effectiveness on behaviour has of course always been somewhat dubious. We all know smoking, alcohol, and a host of other things that might give us some small pleasure are bad for us, and in many cases those around us. However, that knowledge does not change our behaviour, possibly because we were in telic/unreceptive state when we received that information.

Reversal theory (Apter 1989) considers motivation for change over time, but also suggests we change our motivational state of mind on a regular basis – often multiple times a day. Apter describes different focal states in reversal theory as fundamental psychological values that direct behaviour. In relation to the experience economy, I would like to focus here on just the telic/paratelic states. Put simply, the telic state is the goal-oriented planning state, where high levels of emotional arousal are unwelcome and unpleasant. In contrast, the paratelic state is behaviour oriented, and about pleasure seeking and living in the moment, where high levels of emotional arousal are welcome. In other words, a paratelic state is the one in which you have a good time. In a touristic environment we want our clients to be in a paratelic state, where they are in a high state of emotional arousal and unafraid to try new things. For example, someone in a telic state of mind is probably not going to enjoy their first chance at flamenco dancing, whilst someone in a paratelic state is more likely to engage in, and enjoy the experience, and remember it as such. Now, what I'm suggesting is that when people are in a paratelic state, they are more open to trying new things, including receiving and internalising information, as long as they remain in the paratelic state whilst that information is given. Again, Apter (1989) suggests we move quickly between states, and we can be brought down with a bang into a telic state.

Lazarus et al (2010) in the Croatian Medical Journal reviewed interventions taken between 1995 and 2005 at schools, clinics, and in the community to determine what was most effective in terms of changing risky behaviour to combat the contraction amongst individuals, and subsequent spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. This review determined that young people were more receptive to hearing the message from their peers, but the overall findings were that nothing worked to affect behavioural change. In other words, all that well intentioned and planned effort achieved nothing in terms of its intended purpose Again, from a logical point of view, this is probably no great surprise, because we are not logical creatures, we tend to switch off when we are being told about things we should and should not do, particularly in a didactic kind of way, no matter who the messenger, and enter into a telic state where we are simply unreceptive to new information or ways of thinking. The larger point here is the literature is thin on the value of creating memorable experiences as a means of nudging behaviour change. Shock imagery of the impacts of smoking, or motivational interviewing as a logic tool to get an individual to understand the ultimate consequences of their (lack of) action can elicit emotional, and memorable experiences, but the impact of such interventions activities seems uneven at best.

Relevant from the tourism literature is Ballantyne et al.(2011) paper on the implications of wild life tourism, that was intentionally designed to elicit powerful interpretive experiences. Ballantyne et al (2011) state one of the desired outcomes from wildlife tourism is to contribute to ecological conservation through encouragement of visitors to become more sustainable in their everyday behaviours. Their findings report that when a sense of emotional affinity, combined with a reflective response had the most powerful (and memorable) impact on visitors. Their research found that seven percent of respondents reported specific behavioural changes that resulted from their visit. In terms of eliciting a behavioural change from potentially a single visit to a wildlife location that deploys aspects of what is fundamentally the principles of the experience economy, seven percent seems a pretty good number – one most health professionals would envy from a single intervention point

**The Bubble Saver**

During the 1980s and into the 1990s the HIV/AIDS epidemic took a tremendous toll on high risk populations in Europe through fear, illness, and in that time, death. As awareness of the disease and its transmission became clearer, efforts at reducing its impact were deployed through various public health bodies and social organisations. And this was done largely in the usual way public health messages are presented, as information, and through contact points. It's important to remember that in the 1980s and 1990s, there was a lot of actual and perceived uncertainty about the contagious nature of HIV/AIDS and for those of us who are old enough to remember those times, people were scared whether you were in what was deemed a high risk population or not. And people I interviewed who were in high risk populations, were really alarmed because they were literally watching their friends die around them. Fear is a strong emotion, and the strength of that emotion made the usual approach as to how public health approaches behaviour change likely more effective than normal. I am not for a moment suggesting that fear and scare tactics should be deployed as vehicles for changing health outcomes, and as we have already discussed shock tactics have limited impact. But it is important to remember that much of the fear associated with HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s was a fear of the unknown, and that fear of the unknown is a much more frightening proposition than, for example, the fear (and impact on behaviour change impact) related to considering the consequences of finishing a bottle of wine.

As the causes and avenues of transmission of HIV/AIDS became more apparent concerted public health campaigns to educate and encourage the avoidance of risky behaviour were organised in The Netherlands and elsewhere. But it was a moving landscape in terms of science, politics, and public perception, where fact and fiction intermingled. It was not a case of one day everyone waking up and knowing that specific bodily fluids were to be avoided. Rather, it was during a time when people began to worry about all kinds of things such as if they could contract HIV/AIDS from a mosquito bite if it had previously bitten someone infected with the virus. The public were for a period of time, generally confused, and the gay population long wary of the medicalisation of homosexuality (Dijstelbloem 2014). Nevertheless, in the city of Amsterdam once the causes of transmission had been clearly identified, education and implementation of risk-taking avoidance strategies were taken on by internal and external agencies with the gay community. The imperative of the message around safer sex was deemed literally a matter of life and death. Leaders and influencers in the gay rights movement and community, including gay night club and bar owners were attuned to the need to get the message of safer sex out, deploying the usual tactics around signposting and information sharing and through various outlets. And then a few individuals who were known performance artists in the gay community developed the idea of using performance to take to the safer sex message and experience to the audience in clubs and bars, and on a local television programme, and created a skit known as the bubble saver.

To try and paint a picture, one has to refer back to the mid-late 1980s Amsterdam and visualise bars and nightclubs with pumping dance music, anything goes outfits, from the understated to the most outrageous drag costumes and individuals with a sense of personal freedom. Where those in the gay community could meet and be themselves without modifying their behaviour and without fear of discrimination in what Hughes (2002) refers to as gay space. What I'll suggest here is that when members of the gay community are in a gay space, particularly in a fun, social setting such as a bar or nightclub, there is a greater likelihood they are in a paratelic state, and more open to receiving, and acting upon, messages delivered, as long as they remain in a paratelic state. And the innate thinking behind those who developed and performed the bubble saver skit in the clubs and bars and on television was they thought so as well, even if they Adler's notion of reversal theory wasn't at the front of their brains, and the experience economy not yet invented.

What is this mysterious bubble saver then? The bubble saver is simply a skit done by seasoned, largely drag, performers who would either seek out social gay spaces, or be invited in by owners, designed to demonstrate in an experiential way the principles of safer sex in fun, meaningful, and memorable way. In short, the performers would garner the audience's attention and begin an interactive, largely comedic performance, inviting a member of the audience to join them. Once on stage, a champagne bottle would be unwrapped, but with cork in place, and held by the selected audience member, with numerous sexual innuendos and side sketches taking place, but the focal point of the banter constantly returning to the importance of the bubbles, and how it was important to save the bubbles. No one in the room was in any doubt that the bubbles were of course a proxy for seminal fluid. The bubble saver skit culminates with the audience member placing an extra safe condom over the top of the corked wine bottle, followed by the addition of a twisty tie at the base of the condom to secure it to the bottle. At this point the audience member is asked to vigorously shake the champagne bottle, with further innuendo, and at some point the champagne cork will pop, the contents of the bottle will fill and expand the condom, and then the contents flow back into the bottle, and the condom slowly deflates. But, not a drop of champagne has spilled or escaped, and all the bubbles have been saved. And then the music comes back on, and the audience continue to have a good time in their paratelic state, but they have had a bubble saving memorable experience, that had surprise, consistency of theme, and engagement, in an aesthetically and emotionally pleasing environment. And most important of all, in this circumstance, that experience also had an educational element – welcome to the experience economy of health and behavioural change.

## Conclusions

Because it was a meaningful experience, those sharing the experience at the nightclubs, bars, and even on television in Amsterdam, were far more likely to remember it, and because it is at the front of the memory, the experience is more impactful, and it is suggested, more likely to incite behaviour change, in this case, saving the bubbles through a safer approach to sex. The first question the reader will likely ask is, how many lives did the bubble saver save? I cannot answer that. There is no control group, and I cannot prove more than anecdotally that it was any more effective at changing behaviour than that of the Croatian study with young people previously mentioned, as in, not at all. The bubble saver was performed live, and seen on television, by thousands of residents and visitors to Amsterdam. While it is a bit of a leap, if we refer back to our example of a seven percent behavioural change in wildlife tourists from a single visit, perhaps that is some sort of guide. Any additional reduction in risky behaviour beyond that from traditional methods of health information exchange would of course have the potential for significant positive health outcomes in the population, further so due to the potential impact of engaging in risky behaviour at this time.

Are the principles and theoretical underpinnings that inform, and have been informed by, the experience economy the panacea for public health in a strategic policy context? Clearly not, nothing is that simple when scale and the numerous influences that impact on human behaviour and choices are considered. However, it does feel that the thought, and dare I say the experience, as presented through the practical and academic literature related to experience economy suggest that there is real scope to extend it into public health and other key policy areas. Even Universities, which are not necessarily known for being agile in their thinking, have generally moved forward from expecting students to engage with their studies and "hopefully have a good time," to actively creating the conditions so there is a bit less left to chance so that students do, in fact, have a good time. In the United Kingdom the National Student Survey has in recent years acted as a proxy for this considered behavioural change. Nevertheless, whilst the somewhat speculative nature of this paper is acknowledged, it hopefully has shed some light as to the possibilities, be they in health or other key policy arenas, as to how the use of experiences derived from experience economy principles can positively affect behavioural change in areas where more traditional approaches have failed to achieve sought after results. We seemingly put to one side too quickly the importance, and benefits, of the memorable aspects and potential outcomes of simply showing people a good time. Having said that, to have any certainty in terms of outcomes there is a need for targeted and controlled experiential development and research in key policy areas such as public health to know for sure if the experience economy is actually a welcome tool in the box in health and behavioural change.

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# MUTUAL IMPACT BETWEEN TOURISM AND THE HOST COMMUNITY A CASE STUDY AQABA SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE (ASEZA)

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***ABSTRACT***

*Notwithstanding the presence attitudes and trends in the opportunities and challenges of tourism depend largely on the behavior and attitudes of the local community towards the tourism industry despite the fact that these situations are characterized by personality, complexity, and personal changes. The study aims at investigating to know the mutual impact between tourism and the Jordanian host community toward tourism in Aqaba. To achieve this aim, a questionnaire was distributed to a sample consisted of (1200) citizens who live in Aqaba. The distribution and restitution took one year from 1/1/2017 until 30/12/2017, considering of low and high season of tourism. The questionnaire was distributed to the sample members to find out the most important aspects of socio-cultural and economic impacts of tourism in these areas for measuring of attitudes towards tourism. This study is an exploratory, analytical study and follows the approach of collecting and analyzing data to draw conclusions. The researchers used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, T test and ANOVA test to measure the level of importance for the study questions. Results showed that the highest level of attitudes toward tourism was in the economical sub-scale and the lowest was in the social sub-scale. This study offers deeper understanding about the role of social and cultural impact between tourism and the host community in Jordan, to create a balanced sustainable tourism development in Aqaba.*

***Keywords:*** *Attitude, Host Community, Mutual Impact, Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZ)*

## Introduction

Tourism has become a social, cultural, and economical event for both the visitor and the host. It is known that the main attractive tourism factors for the visitor is to access different places of the world and different lifestyles and new cultures.

The relationship between the visitor and the host can be classified into four categories. Firstly, the relationship between visitor and host is transient; visitor resides in the area a short visit and, therefore, any contact between visitors and hosts the opportunity to grow within a few spin-off and external levels. Secondly, the contact between the visitor and the host will be forcing the temporal and spatial visits are usually events are seasonal and non-recurrent here to become popular in the hospitality trade in this period. Tourism services are provided are usually concentrated in a few places because of the outstanding attractions that are concentrated in the place, and the desire of the community in reducing the damage in other activities. Thirdly, this kind of relationship raised with the development of tourism groups, the relationship between the citizen and the visitor are lacking to automatic, there is the timing of personnel most cases of connection is through organized trips, (Package Tour) These meetings are arranged events often take the nature of commercial organization. Fourthly, the unequal relationship between the visitor and the host which is created when members of the host community compare themselves with the manifestations of wealth that appears on the tourist (Marphy, 1985).

Tourism nowadays is one of the most popular ways of spending free time. It is highly developed in almost all countries, mainly because of the material profits it brings. But unfortunately, there is the other side of the coin too, especially if it comes about foreign tourism.

Travel and tourism generate, directly and indirectly, a large percentage of GDP and a huge number of jobs in the worldwide economy, which can be expected to continue to grow. The World Tourism Organization reported that in 2017 International tourist arrivals grew 6% in the first four months of 2018, compared to the same period last year, not only continuing the strong 2017 trend, but exceeding UNWTO's forecast for 2018. Growth was led by Asia and the Pacific (+8%) and Europe (+7%). Africa (+6%), the Middle East (+4%) and the Americas (+3%) also recorded sound results. Earlier this year, UNWTO's forecast for 2018 was between 4-5%. Based on the size, global presence, and continuous growth of the tourism industry, the importance of tourism research cannot be overstated.

Attitudes and trends in the opportunities and challenges of tourism depend largely on the behavior and attitudes of the local community towards the tourism industry even though these situations are characterized by personality, complexity, and personal changes. Through society's attitudes towards tourism, we can identify three main factors: the beginning of the type of contact between visitor and host community results may be the reactions of citizens in the direction of supporting the tourism industry, as well as the relative importance of the tourism industry as a year in the prosperity of society and become more acceptable returns in the bear harassment result from the effectiveness of tourism, and finally beginning to accept the possibility for citizens to be expected in the industry, the volume of investment that can be borne by the region of destination.

Tourism can be both a force for the preservation of or, conversely, a threat to a Community's natural and cultural heritage. Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Heritage report is published by the World Bank in 1999 underscores the symbiotic nature of the relationship. The mutual dependence that exists between tourism and cultural heritage is becoming more Evident. While culture heritage creates a foundation for tourism's growth, tourism has the power to generations funds that make conservation possible. Cultural heritage loses much of its meaning without an audience, and a society participating in and benefiting from it (Show, 1992).

The importance of the study comes out of its goal of identifying the relationship between tourism and the local communities. The community is the key element in the interaction with tourists and provides a picture of the social reality of the host country. Because the local community provides an input to the managing operation of tourism, we can say that local communities may become a tourist attraction. The importance of the study also stems from:

1. Explain the level of changes in social patterns and attitudes in the local community in the area of Aqaba.
2. The results of the study are very important for the planners of the future of the region in terms of tourism.

Moreover, Tourism may be considered as the largest industry in the world in terms of earnings. World Tourism Organization stated that total revenue is directly attributable to tourism; including travelling and purchasing by tourists is estimated at US $ 3,300 billion.

This study tries to know the mutual impact between tourism and the host community regarding social, economic, and cultural factors

**Concepts of the study**

The concept of tourism is defined differently by interested researchers of tourism. Some have defined it as an economic activity, which serve to promote the individuals to move from one place to another for a period not less than (24) hours and up to a period of stability and permanent residence (Kodaree, 1989: Nash, 1979). And it is defined by a number of other interested as the art to maximize the stability, get the moral comfort, reduce tension and satisfy desires of the tourist and motives (Hmame, 1988: Ruby, 1984: Anderson,1981).

The multiplicity of interests and specialization of the concept of tourism has led to variability but for the purposes of the present study a convenient definition should be introduced related to the mutual impact between the local host community. Tourism is a kind of old human behavior crystallizes through a contact with other societies and cultures to interact with them by entering into a new relationship with two parties, one is the host and the other is a newcomer to achieve mutual benefit for both in the economic, political, cultural and social development.

Thus, there is multi-reflected importance and benefit of the tourist movement. Tourism has economic repercussions (kolenate and Albert, 1991), cultural interactions through contact with other cultures (Owens,1991), activated political relations between nations and peoples (Show, 1992) and finally social returns through deepening social relations between people of the same society and to have a look at the habits and traditions of different peoples (Hamame, 1988).

**Host community**

The host community is the resident population in a destination area. The relationship between tourism, tourists and the host community has become a subject of debate in development planning forums. The vital role of community involvement and ownership at all levels of tourism development is stressed. The hosts in the tourism industry are the people with whom tourists come into contact when visiting tourism destinations. They range from local community members, tour operators, tour guides and restaurateurs to hotel staff. Hosts greatly contribute to the perception's tourists develop of the visited destination.

Thus, the cultural differences that influence the quality of the interpersonal interaction between tourists and hosts can significantly add to tourist holiday experiences and satisfaction.

**The Concept of Attitude**

The concept of attitude is commonly used in social and psychological studies. This concept defines the individual response towards people, subjects, or situations. Scientists provide many definitions of this concept including the definition of (Allport) as "a state of readiness or neural and psychological preparedness which has a directive or a dynamic effect on individuals for all subjects and situations which comes out as responses" (Asharo, 1983). Thurston defines attitude as "a degree of positive or negative individual's responses associated with psychological factors" (Moneeb, 1983). Eagly and Chaiken defines it as "a tendency to express positive or negative attitude toward specific situation" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). As well as Mueller defines it as "the emotional response specified with agreeing or disagreeing with a psychological topic expressed an individual's love or hate" (Abdel-Rahman, and Qatami, 1992). Hence, scientists agree that the attitude contains a form of positive or negative estimation towards the individual's environment includes people, situations, or subjects. Attitudes can be learnt and acquired, which means that they are changeable and affected by elements of the environment surrounding individuals and communities. Attitudes can be inferred from the individual's behaviors toward people, themes, and situations. Therefore, attitudes can be measurable by tools and specific benchmarks to determine the degree of their positivity and negativity (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Many scholars think that the attitude is a concept expresses a pattern or an organization of individuals' feelings, knowledge and behavior (components of the attitude). Therefore, studying attitudes helps to understand individual's behavior, predict individual's reaction in the future and give us the ability to control and steer behavior through the stages of planning and preparation. Moreover, attitudes may have some motivating functions such as moving and activating individual, in addition organizing functions to make it easier to deal with the surrounding environment (Lord, 1997).

**Literature Review**

Host and Guest equally benefit economically due to tourism activities, therefore developing countries are concentrating on economic improvement through tourism. But with this massive economic change positive as well as negative consequences are certain.

In today’s world, tourism is an important socio-economic activity. Tourism is now recognized as an industry generating several social and economic benefits. It promotes national integration and international understanding, helps in improving infrastructure, creates employment opportunities and augments foreign exchange earnings. Tourism is as much a part of socio-economic development as any other related activity.

Tourism has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructure and facilities, such as hotels, lodges, and camps, airport, and airstrips. Through its backward linkages, wholesale and retail businesses have also been established, to offer various goods to the tourist industry. Tarred roads and other communication facilities have also been developed in Aqaba to facilitate tourism development. Tourism in the Golden Triangle provides employment opportunities to local communities and it is a significant source of foreign exchange for Jordan. Despite its positive socio-economic impacts, the industry is beginning to have negative environmental impacts in the area such as, noise pollution, and poor waste management.

Samawe conducted a study in 1999. This study was about tourism and promenading in Al-Balqa Governorate in Jordan. He was studying the characteristics of tourism and promenading in the province. He also reviewed visitors' opinions, impressions, and motivations to develop a strategy for the promotion of this type of tourism.

In the same year, 1999, Nasser carried out a study about the dimensions and the political motives for tourism. He explained in his critical and analytical study some inputs which produce outputs help to create integration between the political decision and economical tourism decision. He formulated this in a form explains the real integration investment between politics and tourism aimed to narrow the gap between them to strengthen generally the pillars of the community.

Escrit mentioned in his study in 1994 that tourism in Aqaba has its impacts on the community socially, economically, and environmentally. He focused that while we seek to develop tourism in the region, we must maintain the desert nature of the region.

In his study about the importance of tourism in the Jordanian economy, Abdul-Jabbar showed the suffering of the tourism sector due to the poor utilization of available tourism resources as a result of instability conditions of the region and the government's limited attention to develop tourist sites. (Abdul-Jabbar, 1996).

In 1996, Ashunak conducted a study about the social dimension of tourism in the north of Jordan. His study showed that the domestic tourism had some problems in different social segments and excellence in its potential dependence similar to the arrival of foreign tourists.

There is a study carried out by the (Royal Scientific Society, 2000) entitled with The Economics and Marketing for Basic Tourism Services. This study found that tourist sites suffer from a great lack of infrastructure services, having very few institutions and training centers and rehabilitation of the workforce from the local community to participate in the work at these sites.

**The Problem of the study**

This study aims to identify the social and cultural impact between tourism and the host community in Jordan. To create a balanced sustainable tourism development in Aqaba, we should identify the local community's attitudes toward the process of tourism and measure the level of social consciousness of the community with the importance of tourism its social and cultural impact.

During the last decades, tourism in Jordan contributed in supporting the local economy by increasing national income and increasing employment opportunities which in role increase citizen's income. The sector of tourism not only provides the invisible exports which are an important part of the national income, but also it leads to increase local investment and savings. Moreover, it promotes the export of local products, which lead to increased national income.

Tourism interests in different social and cultural elements such as :the nature of the contact between the tourist and community members and the results of these contacts, the ways in which tourism contributes to change the value-system, the individual behavior, the family relations, the methods of social life, social behavior and having a look on the customs and traditions of different peoples. Furthermore, tourism interests in different political elements for example it activates the political relations between countries. All these elements contributed to the coexistence of Jordanian with tourism and their involvement of multiple tourism activities.

**Methodology**

*Hypotheses of the study*

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between cultural and tourism factors to the local community in Aqaba.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between social and tourism factors to the local community in Aqaba
3. There is a statistically significant relationship between economic and tourism factors to the local community in Aqaba.

*The Population and the sample of the study:*

The two researchers used a questionnaire distributed to a sample consisted of (1200) citizens who live in Aqaba. They retrieved (1200) of the distributed questionnaire. The distribution and restitution took one year from 1/1/2017 until 30/12/2017, taking account of low and high season of tourism.

The questionnaire was distributed to the members of the sample to find out the most important aspects of socio-cultural and economic impacts of tourism in these areas as a measure of attitudes towards tourism. It includes 29 questions were divided according to the five-Likert scale: 1 – strongly disagree 2 - disagree 3 - neutral 4 - agree 5 – strongly agree. And depending on the questionnaires statistical analysis was conducted.

Aqaba is the only coastal city in Jordan and the largest and most populous city on the Gulf of Aqaba. Situated in southernmost Jordan, Aqaba is the administrative center of the Aqaba Governorate. The city had a population of 148,398 in 2015 and a land area of 375 square kilometres (144.8 sq mi). Today, Aqaba plays a major role in the development of the Jordanian economy, through the vibrant trade and tourism sectors. The Port of Aqaba also serves other countries in the region.

Aqaba's strategic location at the north-eastern tip of the Red Sea between the continents of Asia and Africa, has made its port important over the course of thousands of years.

The ancient city was called Ayla, adopted in Latin as Aela and in Arabic as Ayla. Its strategic location and proximity to copper mines made it a regional hub for copper production and trade in the Chalcolithic period. Ayla became a bishopric under Byzantine rule and later became a Latin Catholic titular see after Islamic conquest around AD 650, when it became known as Ayla; the name Aqaba is late medieval. The Great Arab Revolt's Battle of Aqaba, depicted in the film Lawrence of Arabia, resulted in victory for Arab forces over the Ottoman defenders.

Aqaba's location next to Wadi Rum and Petra has placed it in Jordan's golden triangle of tourism, which strengthened the city's location on the world map and made it one of the major tourist attractions in Jordan. The city is administered by the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, which has turned Aqaba into a low-tax, duty-free city, attracting several mega projects like Ayla Oasis, Saraya Aqaba, Marsa Zayed and expansion of the Port of Aqaba. They are expected to turn the city into a major tourism hub in the region.

**Results**

*Characteristics of the sample members: demographic information*

The results of the analysis of the participants' characteristics in this study show that according to the sex variable there were 65.4% males and 34.6% female. Regarding the profession variable 40.7% of the sample works in the public sector, while 59.3% of them work in the private sector. Results of distribution of the sample according to other variables are shown in the following table:

**Table 1.** Distribution of sample of the study on other variables

| variable | Level | Frequency | Ratio |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male<br>Female | 552<br>292 | 65.4%<br>34.6% |
| Job | Public sector<br>Privet sector | 308<br>448 | 40.7%<br>59.3% |
| Education level | Elementary education<br>Secondary education<br>Diploma<br>University education<br>Post graduation | 64<br>156<br>256<br>332<br>32 | 7.6%<br>18.6%<br>30.5%<br>39.5%<br>3.8% |
| Age | 20 and less<br>21- 30<br>31 – 40<br>41 and More | 232<br>444<br>132<br>36 | 27.5%<br>52.6%<br>15.6%<br>4.3% |
| Income | 150 and less<br>151 – 200<br>201 – 250<br>251 - 300<br>More than 301 | 228<br>164<br>140<br>124<br>104 | 30%<br>21.6%<br>18.4%<br>16.3%<br>13.7% |

Source: Authors research

*2: Fields of the study:*

This study has been divided into three fields: cultural, social and economic. The following is the statistical description for questions in each of these fields.

The cultural field:

Results in the following table indicate that most respondents were either strongly agree or agree with all the paragraphs of this part of the questionnaire.

**Table 2.** The level of acceptance on cultural field

| N | Item | strongly agree | agree | nutral | disagree | stongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Tourism promotes spreading the national heritage. | 82<br>38.7 | 114<br>53.8 | 10<br>4.7 | 5<br>2.4 | 1<br>0.5 |
| 2 | Tourism contributes to present the popular traditional and affirms it. | 67<br>31.6 | 122<br>57.5 | 19<br>9 | 4<br>1.9 | |
| 3 | Tourism reflects a good reputation to citizen. | 82<br>38.7 | 96<br>45.3 | 18<br>8.5 | 11<br>5.2 | 4<br>1.9 |
| 4 | Tourism assists to learn new foreign languages. | 78<br>36.8 | 98<br>46.2 | 27<br>12.7 | 3<br>1.4 | 3<br>1.4 |
| 5 | Tourism opens new horizons to the citizen to see the customs of the peoples and traditions. | 70<br>33 | 112<br>52.8 | 17<br>8 | 7<br>3.3 | 3<br>1.4 |
| 6 | Tourism closes the relations between the customs and traditions in different communities. | 42<br>19.8 | 104<br>49.1 | 35<br>16.5 | 23<br>10.8 | 6<br>2.8 |
| 7 | Tourism presents the national uniform to all of communities. | 48<br>22.6 | 106<br>50 | 32<br>15.1 | 16<br>7.5 | 6<br>2.8 |
| 8 | Tourism makes the citizen proud of his/her native language and learns them about it. | 75<br>35.4 | 88<br>41.5 | 29<br>13.7 | 16<br>7.5 | 1<br>0.5 |
| 9 | The tourism handcrafts contribute to preserve the national heritage. | 78<br>36.8 | 110<br>51.9 | 13<br>6.1 | 4<br>1.9 | 1<br>0.5 |
| 10 | Tourism contributes to find technical and tourism rehabilitation centers for citizen. | 52<br>24.5 | 105<br>49.5 | 33<br>15.6 | 13<br>6.1 | 5<br>2.4 |
| 11 | Tourism promotes returning to heritage. | 65<br>30.7 | 96<br>45.3 | 20<br>9.4 | 22<br>10.4 | 5<br>2.4 |

Source: Authors research

To find out the degree of approval in general the ratio of the importance has been calculated in the following table. This table represents the ratio of importance of the paragraphs in the cultural field:

**Table 3.** The level of the ratio of importance in the field

| Level acceptance | The ratio of importance |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 32.1 |
| agree | 50 |
| nutral | 11 |
| disagree | 5.4 |
| stongly disagree | 1.5 |

Source: Authors research

In the first hand, results indicate that 82.1% of respondents agree with the paragraphs of this field. This may be referred to the imitation of some of the cultural characteristics by groups of tourists. They imitate the local community customs, food, and clothing .For example, you may find in Aqaba the eagerness of tourists to wear popular fashion when they move in the city.

On the other hand, there was 15.4% opposed and 11% neutral.

And to find out the most important paragraphs, means and standard deviations of the paragraphs of this domain were calculated, and then they were arranged in an order considering the importance as follows:

**Table 4.** The means and standard deviation for the importance cultural field

| Item number | mean | Standard deviation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism promotes spreading the national heritage. | .704020 | 4.2783 | 1 |
| The tourism handcrafts contribute to preserve the national heritage. | .704840 | 4.2621 | 2 |
| Tourism contributes to present the popular traditional and affirms it. | .669060 | 4.1887 | 3 |
| Tourism assists to learn new foreign languages. | .813940 | 4.1722 | 4 |
| Tourism opens new horizons to the citizen to see the customs of the peoples and traditions. | .813630 | 4.1435 | 5 |
| Tourism reflects a good reputation to citizen. | 914780 | 4.1422 | 6 |
| Tourism makes the citizen proud of his/her native language and learns them about it. | .920970 | 4.0526 | 7 |
| Tourism promotes returning to heritage. | 1.02401 | 3.9327 | 8 |
| Tourism contributes to find technical and tourism rehabilitation centers for citizen. | .931660 | 3.8942 | 9 |
| Tourism presents the national uniform to all of communities. | .964200 | 3.8365 | 10 |
| Tourism closes the relations between the customs and traditions in different communities. | .996470 | 3.7286 | 11 |

Source: Authors research

Results indicate that the most important paragraphs in this field was the first one "Tourism can promote and disseminate national heritage" The mean and standard deviation of this paragraph are 4.27 and 0.704 consecutively. Paragraph number 9 " The tourism handcrafts contribute to preserve the national heritage…The mean and standard deviation of this paragraph are 4.26 and 0.704 consecutively. The less important paragraph was the sixth one "Tourism can bring customs and traditions of different peopl…The tourism handcrafts contribute to preserve the national heritage. closer together."

*Hypothesis of the cultural field:*

To verify this hypothesis, a T test was made as shown in the following:

**Table 5.** T Test in cultural field

| T value | Degree of freedom | The Significant value |
|---|---|---|
| 29.939 | 211 | .005 |

Source: Authors research

Regarding the T- test ($p < 0.05$), results illustration that there is a strong statistically significant relation between cultural and tourism factors for the community of Aqaba. In general, the mean and the standard deviation for this field are 4.00 and 0.489 sequence. , This indicates that tourism opens new horizons for the citizen to view the habits of people and draw a beautiful picture about the community, in addition to the care and attention received by these communities to disseminate the local heritage.

*The social field :*

Results in the following table indicate that most respondents were either strongly agree or agree with all the paragraphs of this field.

**Table 6.** The level of acceptance on social field

| Nr. | Item | Sstrongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 | Tourism helps to increase the environmental awareness, for the individual. | 67<br>31.9 | 113<br>53.8 | 18<br>8.6 | 10<br>4.8 | 2<br>1 |
| 13 | Tourism encourages increasing the excavation and research for the national antiquities. | 65<br>30.7 | 108<br>50.9 | 22<br>10.4 | 13<br>6.1 | |
| 14 | Tourism assists to identify on the personal features for the citizen. | 41<br>19.3 | 114<br>53.8 | 37<br>17.5 | 13<br>6.1 | 4<br>1.9 |
| 15 | Tourism reduces from the individual adherence to customs and traditions. | 40<br>18.9 | 81<br>38.2 | 37<br>17.5 | 34<br>16 | 12<br>5.7 |
| 16 | Tourism helps to spread habits and ethical practices. | 50<br>23.6 | 71<br>33.5 | 36<br>17.0 | 30<br>14.2 | 19<br>9 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | Tourism weakness the social relations between the members of the community. | 38<br>17.9 | 85<br>40.1 | 45<br>21.2 | 30<br>14.2 | 8<br>3.8 |
| 18 | Tourism promotes the religious inclination among the people. | 37<br>17.5 | 44<br>20.8 | 49<br>23.1 | 43<br>20.3 | 37<br>7.5 |
| 19 | Tourism hinders the religious performances for the people. | 42<br>19.8 | 73<br>34.4 | 37<br>17.5 | 33<br>15.6 | 24<br>11.3 |
| 20 | Getting information about shrine and religious sites will contribute to increase awareness of the individual's religions. | 26<br>12.3 | 49<br>23.1 | 46<br>21.7 | 58<br>27.4 | 30<br>14.3 |
| 21 | Tourism confirms some social behaviors such as separation between the two sexes. | 54<br>25.5 | 72<br>34 | 38<br>17.9 | 22<br>10.4 | 18<br>8.5 |

Source: Authors research

To know the degree of approval, in general, the ratio of the importance has been calculated in the following table. This table represents the ratio of importance of the paragraphs in the social field:

**Table 7.** The ratio of relative importance in the social field

| Ratio of Acceptance | Relative importance |
|---|---|
| sstrongly agree | 22.2 |
| agree | 39 |
| neutral | 17.6 |
| disagree | 13.8 |
| stongly disagree | 7.4 |

Source: Authors research

The results indicate that 39.0% of respondents agree with the paragraphs of this domain, and 22.2% strongly agree. While as there was 13.8% opposed, 7.4% strongly opposed and 17.6% neutral.

And to find out the most important paragraphs, means and standard deviations of the paragraphs of this domain were calculated, and then they were arranged in an order with respect to the importance as follows:

**Table 8.** The mean and standard deviation for the importance social field

| Item number | Mean | Standard deviation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism helps to increase the environmental awareness, for the individual. | 4.1095 | .81985 | 1 |
| Tourism encourages increasing the excavation and research for the national antiquities. | 4.0817 | .81534 | 2 |
| Tourism assists to identify on the personal features for the citizen. | 3.8373 | .87834 | 3 |
| Tourism confirms some social behaviors such as separation between the two sexes. | 3.5980 | 1.23384 | 4 |
| Tourism weakness the social relations between the members of the community. | 3.5583 | 1.07022 | 5 |
| Tourism reduces from the individual adherence to customs and traditions. | 3.5049 | 1.15540 | 6 |
| Tourism helps to spread habits and ethical practices. | 3.5000 | 1.26008 | 7 |
| Tourism hinders the religious performances for the people. | 3.3636 | 1.28296 | 8 |
| Tourism promotes the religious inclination among the people. | 3.0048 | 1.35370 | 9 |
| Getting information about shrine and religious sites will contribute to increase awareness of the individual's religions. | 2.9187 | 1.25885 | 10 |

Source: Authors research

Firstly, results indicate that the most important paragraphs in this area was question No.12 "Tourism encourages to increase exploration and research for national monuments" with a mean of 4.10 and a standard deviation of 0.81. Secondly, results indicates that the less important was paragraph No. 20, "Getting information about shrine and religious sites will contribute to increase awareness of the individual's religions." with a mean of 2.91 and standard deviation of 1.25.

*Hypothesis of the social field:*

In order to check this hypothesis a T test was made as follow

**Table 9.** T Test in social field

| T value | Degree of freedom | The significant value |
|---|---|---|
| 11.642 | 210 | 0.00 |

Source: Authors research

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between social and tourism factors for the people who live in Aqaba. The general mean for this field was 3.48 and the standard deviation was 0.60 .

*The Economical Field:*

Results in the following table indicates that most respondents were either strongly agree or agree with all the paragraphs of this field.

**Table 10.** The level of acceptance on economic field

| N | Item | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | disagree | stongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | Tourism helps to reduce the size of the unemployment. | 80<br>37.7 | 96<br>45.3 | 19<br>9 | 10<br>4.7 | 3<br>1.4 |
| 23 | Tourism promotes the multiplicity and diversity of employment opportunities. | 103<br>48.6 | 84<br>39.6 | 12<br>5.7 | 2<br>9 | 4<br>1.9 |
| 24 | Tourism contributes to increase in the national income. | 98<br>46.2 | 93<br>43.9 | 8<br>3.8 | 6<br>2.8 | 3<br>1.4 |
| 25 | Tourism plays an important role in improving the quality of raw materials (food and clothing). | 76<br>35.8 | 105<br>49.5 | 18<br>8.5 | 8<br>3.8 | 2<br>9 |
| 26 | Tourism opens up new vistas for investment projects. | 55<br>25.9 | 97<br>45.8 | 40<br>18.9 | 11<br>5.2 | 4<br>1.9 |
| 27 | Tourism contributes to maintain the domestic capital. | 50<br>23.6 | 117<br>55.2 | 29<br>13.7 | 8<br>3.8 | 5<br>2.4 |
| 28 | Tourism attracts external capitals. | 93<br>43.9 | 94<br>44.3 | 12<br>5.7 | 7<br>3.3 | 2<br>9 |
| 29 | Tourism attracts multinational companies. | 91<br>42.9 | 101<br>47.6 | 10<br>47.6 | 7<br>3.3 | |

Source: Authors research

To know the degree of approval, in general, the ratio of the importance has been calculated in the following table. This table represents the ratio of importance of the paragraphs in the economical field:

**Table 11.** The level of relative importance in the economical field

| Level acceptance | Relative importance |
|---|---|
| sstrongly agree | 38.8 |
| agree | 47.3 |
| neutral | 8.9 |
| disagree | 3.5 |
| disagree | 1.4 |

Source: Authors research

Regarding the previous table, the results shows that 47.3% of respondents agree with the paragraphs of this domain, and 38.8% strongly agree, while there are 3.5% opposed 1.4% strongly opposed and 8.9% neutral.

To reveal the most important paragraphs, means and standard deviations of the paragraphs of this domain were calculated, then they were arranged in an order with regard to the importance as follows:

**Table 12.** The mean and standard deviation for the importance economical field

| Item number | mean | Standard deviation | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tourism promotes the multiplicity and diversity of employment opportunities. | 4.3659 | | 1 |
| Tourism contributes to increase in the national income. | 4.3317 | | 2 |
| Tourism attracts multinational companies. | 4.3206 | | 3 |
| Tourism attracts external capitals. | 4.2933 | | 4 |
| Tourism plays an important role in improving the quality of raw materials (food and clothing). | 4.1722 | | 5 |
| Tourism helps to reduce the size of the unemployment. | 4.1538 | | 6 |
| Tourism contributes to maintain the domestic capital. | 3.9522 | | 7 |
| Tourism opens up new vistas for investment projects. | 3.9082 | | 8 |

Source: Authors research

As the former table displays, the most important paragraphs in this area is question No.23 "Tourism contributes to increase the national income," with a mean of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.80. The less important paragraph is No. 26, "Tourism opens up new vistas for investment projects." with a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 1.25.

*Hypothesis of the economic field:*

To verify this hypothesis T test was used the following:

**Table 13.** T Test in cultural field

| T value | Degree of freedom | Significant value |
|---|---|---|
| 26.954 | 209 | 0.00 |

Source: Authors research

Results demonstration that there is a statistically significant relationship between economical and tourism factors to the community of Aqaba. In general, the mean is 4.14 and standard deviation is 0.615

**Conclusion**

The present study reveals three results as follows:

1. As it is clear from the results of the study the economical field comes in first degree with approval ratio reached to 86,1% of the study sample The second degree is the cultural field with approval ratio reached to 82%,and finally comes the social field with approval ratio stood at 61.1%. This proves that the local community in Aqaba feels directly the monetary rewards of tourism activities in their area.
2. According to the study almost a third of the sample either opposed or neutral in the social field. In addition, the most important paragraph of this field is "Tourism concerns ruins through the process of exploration".
3. The researchers found that there are about 7% of the appointed members of the study indicated that tourism activities have a negative change brings the local culture of community members in Aqaba.

There is statistically significant relation between Tourism attitude (Culture) and effect tourism in Aqaba. where Tourism promotes spreading the national heritage, reflects a good reputation to citizen, assists to learn new foreign languages, opens new horizons to the citizen to see the customs of the peoples and traditions, closes the relations between the customs and traditions in different communities, presents the national uniform to all of communities, makes the citizen proud of his/her native language and learns them about it, contributes to preserve the national heritage, contributes to find technical and tourism rehabilitation centers for citizen, and promotes returning to heritage .

There is statistically significant relation between Tourism attitude (Social) and effect tourism in Aqaba. where helps to increase the environmental awareness, for the individual, encourages increasing the excavation and research for the national antiquities, assists to identify on the personal features for the citizen, reduces from the individual adherence to customs and traditions , helps to spread habits and ethical practices, weakness the social relations between the members of the community, promotes the religious inclination among the people , Robin study suggested that residents' satisfaction with neighbourhood conditions and community services are important determinants of perceived positive and negative impacts of tourism, benefits of tourism in Petra, far exceed its negative consequences. (Robin Nunkoo, Haywantee Ramkissoon, 2011; Sami Ahmad Alhasanat, Lindsay,2011) ).

Kannapa noted the role played by the local leader and by cooperation among tourism stakeholders in the planning and implementation that led the community to pursue local tourism development, Mansfeld found that people living further from tourism areas were more negative about the impacts, but Sheldon and Var reported that residents in higher tourist density areas were more positive about the industry (Mansfeld ,1992; Kannapa Pongponrat, 2011; Sheldon and Var, 1984; Timothy, 2013 ) .

Hinders the religious performances for the people, contributes to increase awareness of the individual's religions, confirms some social behaviors such as separation between the two sexes, confirms the respect for women in public places.

There is statistically significant relation between tourism attitude (Economic) and effect tourism in Aqaba. Where helps to reduce the size of the unemployment, promotes the multiplicity and diversity of employment opportunities, contribute to increase in the national income, Most impact of tourism studies have been restricted to economic analysis and benefits occurring to the area. Recently, concern has been aired on the existence of negative impacts ( Abraham Pizam,1978) Massa chusetts, were interviewed to measure their perception of how tourism impacts on different domains. An Attitude-Index was created by averaging the scores of each respondent. Comparisons were made between the respondent's attitudes toward tourism and their dependence on tourism for a livelihood.

Lindsay drawing on the perspectives of residents of who have been exposed to the development of facilities and services for surf tourists The tradition of tourism businesses and regional tourism industries is to measure their value to the host community by jobs, wages, and tax revenues even though every member of that community is affected on a daily basis through a broad variety of impacts (Timothy Tyrrell, Cody Morris Paris, Vernon Biaett ,2013;Lindsay E. Usher, Deborah Kerstetter ,2014) plays an important role in improving the quality of raw materials (food and clothing), opens up new vistas for investment projects , contributes to maintain the domestic capital, attracts external capitals, attracts multinational companies, assists to enter the foreign currency into the country, leads to build new transport routes, promotes the air fleet capacity and quality.

There is statistically significant relation between tourism attitude (Political) and effect tourism in Aqaba. Where promotes to strengthen the political relations with other countries, increases the independency of the country, assists to develop the political stability, contributes increase in the national cohesion, activates of democracy in the country, contributes to increase the political awareness for citizen, improves the political programs for national parties .

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# THE NEW AGE OF ENHANCED VISITOR INVOLVMENT AND EXPERIENCE

# THE SERVICE QUALITY SATISFACTION IN PEER-TO-PEER (P2P) ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES: THE CASE OF DUBROVNIK SETTLEMENT

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***ABSTRACT***

*Due to the strong impact of the sharing economy, and huge and rapid growth of peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation in tourism and hospitality industry, examining the level of tourists' satisfaction with its service quality is of crucial importance. The main goal of this paper is to analyse service quality in Airbnb accommodation facilities from the tourists' point of view by using the SERVQUAL model. Also, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding which of SERVQUAL dimensions impacts the overall satisfaction of the service quality more. In order to achieve the main aims of this paper, empirical research was carried out on the convenience sample of 507 tourists who have used Airbnb accommodation facilities in a period from May the 1st to November the 1st 2018 in the Dubrovnik settlement (The Republic of Croatia). The data was analysed by Cronbach alpha, explorative factor analysis (EFA) with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett tests and multiple regression. The results indicate that, in general, tourists are satisfied with the quality of service in facilities they have used while staying in Dubrovnik settlement. Furthermore, it is pointed out that each of SERVQUAL model dimensions has different contribution to total service quality satisfaction. Besides the theoretical contribution, the findings of this paper will be used as recommendations for destination management concerning future norms and guidelines for increasing service quality in P2P accommodation as well as for improving the procedure of facilities' categorisation. Airbnb accommodations' hosts will also benefit from this research in a form of suggested marketing strategies for their future work that will help in achieving higher revenue from their accommodation facilities' listing and realising better competitive position on P2P accommodation market.*

***Keywords:*** *peer-to-peer accommodation, service quality satisfaction, SERVQUAL, Dubrovnik settlement*

## Introduction

Sharing economy is the concept of peer to peer sharing of access to goods and services, which prioritizes use and accessibility over ownership. It has been rapidly growing in the lodging industry by providing low-cost accommodation and a home like environment, and direct interactions with the residents (Guttentag, 2016). The rapid rise is driven by various factors, including societal (e.g. increasing population density, desire for community, etc.), economic (e.g. monetize excess inventory, increase financial flexibility, etc.), and technological (e.g. social networking, mobile devices, and payment system) (Owyang, 2013). Two sharing economy pioneers are Uber and Airbnb. They are well-known global giants and leading players in the sharing economy sector, which is estimated to reach $335 billion by 2025 (Marchi and Parekh, 2015). Airbnb, as P2P short-term rental company, is a part of the broader sharing economy also called collaborative consumption (HomeAway, Wimdu, FlipKey, Housetrip), that is often associated with Internet and mobile technologies (Guttentag et al., 2018). It is predominant example of sharing economy that competes by sharing P2P accommodation focusing on vacation rental customers. Airbnb, which was founded in 2008, is an online intermediary platform for people to list, discover and book unique accommodations around the world. It connects hosts and guests by sharing accommodation for short stay keeping the service fee for each reservation and from both sides. Its accommodation marketplace provides access to more than 6 million unique places to stay in over 100 000 cities and 191 countries. This exponential growth of accommodation facilities means that hosts are increasingly facing greater competition and their marketing practices, therefore, require more systematic and informed approaches (Gibs et al., 2018). Till today more than 260 million guests have booked and stayed in Airbnb facilities across the world. (Airbnb, 2019).

As the number of accommodation facilities on Airbnb platform continuously rises it became of paramount importance to analyse their quality as one of the main elements of competing between hosts, and aspect that really matter to guests. According to Ju et al. (2019) the accommodation facility provided by host is considered as a key service quality dimension in Airbnb. High level of service quality in the accommodation sector is on one hand, proportional to tourists' satisfaction and their intention to revisit, and on the other to owners' capability to realise better competitive position on the tourism accommodation market and higher income. Due to previously mentioned, it is important to detect which dimension of service quality impacts the overall tourist satisfaction the most. Therefore the main purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to identify the key elements of service quality in P2P accommodation facilities in Dubrovnik settlement from tourists point of view; 2) to detect the level of impact of each service quality dimension on overall tourist satisfaction. In order to do so SERVQUAL model, developed 1988 by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, has been employed. The service quality satisfaction has been analysed as a gap between expectations and perceptions. The statements used in this research were adopted from scientific literature of SERVQUAL and adjusted for the current research. Despite the opinion of Ju et al. (2019) that SERVQUAL model is more appropriate for offline experience the authors of this paper consider quality of host service and accommodation facilities as the most important elements for tourist experience and satisfaction.

Reasons why Dubrovnik settlement has been chosen for this research are multiple: 1) it is the largest tourist city in the Republic of Croatia in terms of the volume of tourists with more than 1,1 million arrivals and 3,4 million overnights (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2019); 2) it suffers serious problems from mass tourism; 3) there is a strong presence of P2P accommodation facilities which coexist with a high quality hotel accommodations (over 50% of all tourist beds are in P2P accommodation facilities); 4) tourism is the main economic activity and primary source of Dubrovnik economic development; 5) the renting of tourist accommodation in Dubrovnik settlement is a kind of tradition that has appeared back in 18th century.

The data was analysed by Cronbach alpha, explorative factor analysis (EFA) with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett tests and multiple regression.

**Peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation**

The progress of ICT continuously changes and revolutionizes the tourism and hospitality market in a way that impacts the ability of consumers to provide services and coproduce consumption experiences for themselves and others (Perren and Grauerholz, 2015). P2P exchange, where both, the service provider and recipient, are individuals, is also discussed as the sharing economy because individuals are sharing access to resources for a fee or other compensation; and as collaborative consumption because reduced economic costs, time and effort required for consumer participation in the production of market offerings made exchange among individuals convenient, easy and as readily available as Internet access (Perren and Grauerholz, 2015). Key attributes of sharing economy are: 1) access over ownership (access-based consumption/on-demand economy); 2) peer-to-peer (peer-to-peer economy); 3) allocation of idle resources (collaborative consumption) (Constantiou et al., 2017). According to Sundararajan (2014) there are three different constituents of P2P exchange model: platforms/person-person marketplaces which facilitate the exchange of goods and services between peers and often charges a commission to one or the other trading party or to both of them; entrepreneurs/individuals/small business that supply goods and services, and the consumers who demand (rent, consume). An Airbnb is trusted and essentially online platform which allows individuals to become entrepreneurs by offering part or all their living space to their peers as short-term accommodation. There are two main types of hosting trough Airbnb, first one is with physical presence of host where guest and host share the property, and the second one is with host's absence where the host does not physically share the property with guest. Ikkala (2014, in Priporas et al., 2017) named first type of hosting on-site hospitality and second one remote hospitality. In this research P2P accommodation facilities within remote hospitality type have been analysed.

The growth in P2P accommodation supply has arisen due to the dual benefits that it generates: first, property owners generate a return on a property investment; second tourists find apartments or rooms at a more competitive price than hotels (Fang et al., 2016). Although it is assumed that benefit (lower cost) is dominant driver and reason for choosing P2P accommodation, Tussyadiah & Pesonen (2018) suggested that the market for P2P accommodation comprises experienced travellers who are more accustomed to different standards of quality in accommodation and, thus, open to less-predictable, but unique experiences as they enjoy staying with local residents. P2P accommodation appeals to travellers socially as it provides an opportunity to have unique local experiences (Tussyadiah and Pesonen, 2016). The use of P2P accommodation is driven by different reasons: direct interaction with host and connection with local community, better value for money, cost reduction, and desire for stronger community.

## The service quality measurement

Accommodation sector and tourism industry in general are sectors which are dominant service sectors. Providing outstanding service quality and realising high customer satisfaction are important issues and challenges that service sector is facing with (Hung et al., 2003). According to Parasuraman et al. (1988) perceived service quality is degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perceptions and expectations. Service quality in the accommodation sector has received growing attention with most studies using modified or adopted version of the SERVQUAL model to measure service quality. SERVQUAL instrument and gap model with ten factors (tangible, reliability, responsiveness, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication and understanding the customer) was originally developed by Parasuraman et al. 1985. and modified in 1988. by reducing the number of factors to five (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy). After this work by Parasuraman et al. service quality literature received widespread attention. They suggested three underlying themes: 1) service quality is more difficult for the consumer to evaluate comparing with quality of goods, 2) service quality perceptions result from a comparison of consumer expectations with actual service performance, 3) quality evaluations are not made solely on the outcome of service; they also involve evaluations of the process of service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1985). SERVQUAL scale has been used as service quality measurement model in different sectors: in hotels (Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Akan, 1995; Akbaba, 2006; Blešić et al., 2014; Rauch et al., 2015; Debasish and Dey, 2015), in travel agencies (LeBlanc, 1992; Ryan and Cliff, 1997; Bigné et al., 2003; Filiz, 2010; Marinković et al., 2011), in outdoors/sport tourism (Kouthouris and Alexandris, 2005), in health tourism (Marković et al., 2014; Madžar et al., 2016; Uğur and Gülmez, 2017; Qolipour et al., 2018).

Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed performance-based model (SERVPERF) claiming that performance is an important factor when measuring service quality. Other studies have developed new tools in lodging industry, the LOGQUAL (Patton et al., 1994), the HOLSERV (Mei et al., 1999) and the LQI (Getty and Getty, 2003) scales.

Despite the SERVQUAL was an object of various criticisms from methodological and conceptual points of view, it is still regarded as a leading measure of service quality. In this study SERVQUAL instrument with gap analysis was used as a tool of analysis.

## Research methodology

A high structured questionnaire, that included 22 statements which were adopted from scientific literature of SERVQUAL and adjusted for current research, was used. Perceptions and expectations have been measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Perceptions have been observed as perceptions of the performance of hosts providing the services, while expectations have been viewed as desires or wants of tourists, i.e. what tourists feel a host should offer. The service quality satisfaction has been analysed as a gap between expectations and perceptions. All statements were phrased positively as suggested by authors of SERVQUAL model. The survey instrument was then pilot tested on 20 respondents. After elimination, addition and rephrasing of several statements, the final questionnaire was prepared consisting of 22 statements. The empirical research was carried out on the convenience sample of 507 tourists who have used Airbnb accommodation facilities in a period from May the 1st to November the 1st 2018 in Dubrovnik settlement (The Republic of Croatia). The data were input in SPSS 26.0. Reliability analysis was employed to test the internal consistency among the items and of the overall scale. It indicates the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to assess the goodness of a measure. Johns et al. (2007, p 93) suggest that values of coefficient alpha equal to or above 0,70 are acceptable indicators of reliability. The twenty-two items have been grouped into five dimensions according to the explorative factor analysis (EFA) that was performed to discover underlying dimensions of service. R-mode Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation and Eigen value equal or more than one has been used (Kinnear and Taylor, 1987 in Bhat, 2012). Only loadings equal or above 0, 40 were retained. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has been used in order to confirm that correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, while Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measured sampling adequacy and has been limited to 0,6 level and above (Tabachink and Fidel, 2001 in Bhat, 2012). Multiple linear regression analysis was used to measure the relationship between dependent variable (overall service quality in P2P accommodation facilities from the tourist point of view) and independent variables (factors).

## Findings and analysis

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample. The number of male respondents (57%) was slightly higher than female (43%). The highest proportion of the respondents (37, 9%) fell into the 30-39 age group, followed by the 18-29-year age group (29%). Most respondents have personal monthly income 2000 and more euros (65%). Respondents are mostly from the countries that are within European Union. The short stay of tourists in the whole Dubrovnik in all accommodation units is confirmed by this research where 23, 7% of all respondents stayed for three nights and 17, 8% only for one night. Respondents mostly stayed in studio apartments and apartments with four stars (64, 5%). The dominating respondents' motives of visit were rest and relaxation (63, 5%) and historical heritage (29, 4%).

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents

| Variables | | Frequency | Percentage of total (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 289 | 57 |
| | Female | 218 | 43 |
| Age | 18-29 | 147 | 29 |
| | 30-39 | 192 | 37,9 |
| | 40-49 | 81 | 16 |
| | 50-59 | 72 | 14,2 |
| | 60 and more | 15 | 3 |
| Personal monthly income in € | 999 and less | 41 | 8,1 |
| | 1000-1999 | 136 | 26,8 |
| | 2000-2999 | 130 | 25,6 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 3000 and more | 200 | 39,4 |
| Country of origin | within European Union | 312 | 61,5 |
| | outside of European Union | 195 | 38,5 |
| Length of stay in the unit | one night | 90 | 17,8 |
| | two nights | 44 | 8,7 |
| | three nights | 120 | 23,7 |
| | four nights | 71 | 14 |
| | five nights | 56 | 11 |
| | six nights | 50 | 9,9 |
| | seven nights | 66 | 13 |
| | more than 7 nights | 10 | 2 |
| Type of accommodation | studio/apartment 5* | 10 | 2 |
| | studio/apartment 4* | 327 | 64,5 |
| | studio/apartment 3* | 65 | 12,8 |
| | room | 105 | 20,7 |
| Dominate motive of visit | rest and relaxation | 322 | 63,5 |
| | historical heritage | 149 | 29,4 |
| | wine and gastronomy | 16 | 3,2 |
| | events/festivals | 20 | 3,9 |

Source: Field survey

Factor loadings of all items were above suggested cut-value of 0,40. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity revealed Chi-square at 10474,025 (p<0,000) which indicated that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy has been measured at level of 0,919.

**Table 2.** Factor Analysis Results and Reliability Coefficients

| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 | Factor 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TANGIBLES | | | | | |
| The accommodation has up-to-date (modern) furniture | 0,779 | | | | |
| The accommodation has up-to-date (modern) equipment | 0,809 | | | | |
| The accommodation's physical facilities are visually appealing | 0,755 | | | | |
| The appearance of the accommodation's physical is in keeping with the type of service provided | 0,729 | | | | |
| The accommodation's employee is well dressed and appears neat | 0,726 | | | | |
| EMPATHY | | | | | |
| The accommodation's employee gives her/his guests personalised attention | | 0,757 | | | |
| The accommodation's employee has understanding for guests' special needs | | 0,620 | | | |
| The accommodation's employee addresses guest by name | | 0,608 | | | |
| Accommodation's operation hour is convenient to all its guests | | 0,826 | | | |
| ASSURANCE | | | | | |
| Guests feel safe and secure in their stay | | | 0,478 | | |
| The accommodation's employee advices undecided guests | | | 0,625 | | |
| The accommodation's employee is always available for her/his guests | | | 0,794 | | |
| The accommodation's employee is very kind and cordial ton | | | 0,649 | | |
| RESPONSIVENESS | | | | | |
| The accommodation's employee is high professional | | | | 0,719 | |
| The accommodation provides its services according to the announcement | | | | 0,549 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The accommodation's employee is always willing to help, even while busy | | | | 0,796 | |
| The accommodation provides its services in the domain "value for money" | | | | 0,614 | |
| RELIABILITY | | | | | |
| The accommodation's employees provide service at the time they promise to do so | | | | | 0,705 |
| If you have problems you can rely on accommodation's employee | | | | | 0,741 |
| The accommodation's employees always fulfil their promises regarding service | | | | | 0,866 |
| The accommodation's employee informs guests about all activities in the destination | | | | | 0,686 |
| You can trust your accommodation's employee | | | | | 0,677 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0,833 | 0,908 | 0,818 | 0,838 | 0,900 |
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy | 0,919 | | | | |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square) | 10474,025* | | | | |
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0,96 | | | | |

Source: Field survey

Note. *Significance at ,000 level.

The reliability of overall scale, as well as values for scales of each dimension (Chronbach's Alpha), is significant what is an indication that the items of the five dimensions are accepted for analysis.

**Table 3.** SERVQUAL scores of factors and overall service quality

| Service quality dimension | Mean Score | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Expectation | Perception | Service Quality |
| Tangibles | 4,15 | 4,64 | 0,49 |
| Empathy | 4,05 | 4,75 | **0,70** |
| Assurance | 4,16 | 4,81 | 0,65 |
| Responsiveness | 4,16 | 4,76 | 0,60 |
| Reliability | 4,15 | 4,81 | **0,66** |
| **Overall Service Quality** | 3,94 | 4,46 | 0,52 |

Source: Field survey

It is evident from the results that service quality of P2P accommodation facilities in Dubrovnik settlement is above expectations of tourists who have used those facilities. The key element of service quality is empathy of employee(s) (personal attention, understanding, availability) followed by reliability (accuracy, confidence, sense of security).

Further, multiple linear regression was employed to measure the impact of each service quality dimension onto overall service quality in P2P accommodation facilities in Dubrovnik settlement form tourist point of view. Table 4 shows the results of regression analysis where service quality dimensions/factors are independent variables and overall service quality is dependent variable.

**Table 4.** Results of regression analysis (n=507)

| Independent variables | Standardized coefficients Beta | t-values | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | | 112,5 | ,000 |
| Tangibles | 0,187 | 2,795 | ,005 |
| Empathy | 0,149 | 2,592 | ,072* |
| Assurance | 0,260 | 2,954 | ,008 |
| Responsiveness | 0,200 | 2,874 | ,049 |
| Reliability | 0,547 | 6,983 | ,000 |

$R^2 = 0,747$

F = 172, 15

Significant F = 0,000

p<0, 05; *p<0, 1

According to regression analysis' results, the five service quality factors together explained 75% of the variance in the evaluation of overall service quality, which was significant considering the F-value. The significance values of four factors were less than the significant level of 0, 05 and of one factor less than the significant level of 0, 1. An analysis of t-values for the five factors indicated that the most important factor in estimating an overall service quality in P2P accommodation was "reliability", followed by "assurance" and "responsiveness".

It is confirmed that equipment in facility is not of high importance for tourists stayed in P2P accommodation, whereas it is the most important one in the case of hotel accommodation (Ladhari 2012 in Priporas et al., 2017). In P2P accommodation tourists appreciate the relation of the host to the guest more than the material equipment and arrangement of the facility. In this research "tangibles" was not the most important factor in predicting guests' overall service quality evaluation which is similar to the results of Parasuraman et al.'s (1988) study.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted in the P2P accommodation and has identified five service quality dimensions guests use to assess service quality of private accommodation facilities. The findings confirmed the five-dimensional structure of SERVQUAL. It is evident from the results that service quality of P2P accommodation facilities in Dubrovnik settlement is above expectations of tourists who have used those facilities. The key element of service quality is empathy of employee(s) (personal attention, understanding, availability) followed by reliability (accuracy, confidence, sense of security).

Significant contribution of this paper is an extension of knowledge regarding the usage of SERVQUAL in P2P accommodation. Besides the theoretical contribution and due to the increase of P2P accommodation facilities in Dubrovnik settlement, and to the challenges of overtourism in general, findings of this paper could be useful as recommendations to destination management concerning future norms and guidelines for increasing service quality in P2P accommodation as well as for improving the procedure of facilities' categorisation. Airbnb accommodations' hosts will also benefit from this research in a form of suggested marketing strategies for their future work that will help in achieving higher revenue from their accommodation facilities' listing and realising better competitive position on P2P accommodation market. Their goal is to address a market segment willing to pay to enjoy in a quality, unique and traditional accommodation. Also, the results of this paper subsidise to a better understanding on how tourists evaluate service quality in P2P accommodation.

The main limitations of this study were the research area and form of the sample. Due to the fact that research has been conducted only in Dubrovnik settlement and that convenience sample has been used, outcomes of this research should not be generalised and can be considered only as indicative. Furthermore, from the methodological interpretation it would be interesting to see the results of two separated questionnaires (of one before receiving the accommodation service and another after receiving the service). It can also be assumed that outside of Dubrovnik settlement the service quality satisfaction in P2P accommodation facilities is different. Future researches should examine overall satisfaction of service quality in P2P accommodation considering the type of the season, tourists' socio-demographics, accommodation facilities' type and category, and tourists' intention to revisit the destination and stay at the same facility.

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# STUDENT STUDY ABROAD DESTINATION BRANDING IN THE VUCA WORLD: THE SASE OF A PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN CROATIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Due to the constant change in the work environment, higher education institutions need to produce students who are capable to adapt in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) work environment. Zagreb School of Economics and Management (ZSEM) uses specific learning pedagogy to prepare students for the work skills they will need in the VUCA environment. This exploratory study examines how international students perceive such learning pedagogy and how this can be used for future branding of ZSEM, and Croatian (private) higher education institutions in general.*

*This research undertakes three focus groups with ZSEM international students. It seeks to explain why and how students choose both ZSEM and Croatia as a study abroad destination. It seeks to explore whether these international students perceive ZSEM learning pedagogy as helpful for the VUCA work environment, and importance it has in study abroad decision-making process.*

*The findings indicate that students shared positive feedback on the learning pedagogy at the ZSEM through believing that it helps them in developing their interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive competences. The students also highlighted that they were surprised not to find a lot of information about learning pedagogy in existing promotion materials.*

*Croatian private higher education institutions can use their learning pedagogy as a competitive advantage in their positioning as a study abroad destination. Implications highlight the need for the relevant governmental bodies to ensure including branding of Croatia as a study abroad destination in an existing destination branding strategy and by that increase the number of students from around the world to come and study in Croatia.*

***Keywords:*** *Destination branding; study abroad destination; Croatia; private higher education institutions; VUCA; learning pedagogy*

## Introduction

The challenges that the world is facing today, together with its complexities are unprecedented. At the same time, higher education is expected to both educate and prepare students for dealing with complex issues in both scientific as well as professional environments (Longmore, 2017). The education system, therefore, needs to adapt to the process of producing all-round students who are then able to adapt to what companies' term as a VUCA environment – volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (Davie, 2013). This would mean that higher education institutions should develop problem-solving skills of their students for them to be able to solve problems that have no "clear-cut-solutions" (Delaney et al., 2017).

What the 21st century needs in terms of skills is student graduates to be "independent thinkers, problem solvers, and decision-makers" (Silva, 2009:630). Furthermore, there should be an emphasis on what students can do with their knowledge, rather then what units of knowledge they have (Silva, 2009). In a similar vein, Rotherham, and Willingham (2010) argued that knowledge and skills are intertwined, not separate. Therefore, today's models of learning should be student-central, problem-based, and project-based, with an engagement with the (local)community (Silva, 2009).

Higher education institutions should recognize what they can offer in the context of program attractiveness for students' future VUCA work environment. This research aims to understand impressions of international students that are already studying at the Zagreb School of Economics and Management (hereafter ZSEM) and use those attributes for future branding of ZSEM, but also Croatia, as a higher education study abroad destination.

## Literature Review

### *Higher Education in a VUCA World*

Real-world challenges are very complex, often unclearly defined and the solutions to these are often multidisciplinary in nature (Seow et al., 2019). This is why higher education institutions should prepare students to grasp those challenges and sharpen their skills such as the ability to evaluate new inputs and perspectives and build new capacities and strengthen autonomy that is critical for today's work and life balance (Davises et al., 2011). Institute for the Future released report The Future Work Skills 2020 where they have identified novel and adaptive thinking and multidisciplinarity as a skill important for the future (Davies et al., 2011). Consequently, Hogan et al. (2016) identified skills needed for the VUCA work environment and these are: (1) communications skills; (2) self-management; (3) the ability to learn independently and in trans-disciplinary ways; (4) ethics and responsibility; (5) cross-cultural competency; (6) teamwork in real and virtual ways; (7) social intelligence; (8) flexibility; (9) thinking skills; and (10) digital skills.

Having all these in mind, in an environment where student's education is rooted in content knowledge, it is more than important for higher education institutions to embrace innovation in their teaching pedagogies through making learning more applicable (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2015). Through recognizing the need to prepare students with future work skills and to grasp such growing and complex problems and by that cope with the VUCA work environment, ZSEM identified models of learning aimed at including innovation in curriculum by adapting learning approach through project-based learning, multidisciplinary approach, collaboration between faculty and external partners as well as active mentoring of students. These all were recognized by international students and it is believed that such a learning approach that adapts to the VUCA world, may positively be used in future branding of ZESM, as well as Croatia as a student study abroad destination.

*International Higher Education*

The mobility of international students is instrumental in the internationalization of higher education institutions. More so, it plays a crucial role in future careers and development of students (Li and Bray, 2007). For some, this international student experience can be a "ticket to migration" (Rizvi, 2005), while for others it serves as a competitive advantage over other students who do not have international student experience. As Rivza and Teichler (2007) define, it is mobility in pursuit of what is considered a better form of education. This goes along with studying abroad as being an important part of the experience expanding students' knowledge of other cultures and languages, which consequently makes them better candidates in the future recruitment processes. All this, together with rising global demand for tertiary education and internationalization of the labor market positively affects students' motivations to study abroad (OECD, 2016).

There are many reasons why countries have recognized the importance of receiving international students. As Altbach (2004) suggests, developed countries understand the importance of students having global awareness and perspective to be competing in the VUCA environment, which can be achieved through international higher education. More so, Western countries that gain most of the international students widely benefit from it. Such benefits may be seen through short-term economic contributions coming from student's tuitions and living expenses, as well as long-term benefits of skilled migration by keeping the best students as human capital (Baruch et al., 2007). Higher education institutions can view international students as a source of revenue, as well as a means of increasing cultural diversity (Wilkins, 2011).

According to UNESCO (2018) in 2016, there were more than 4.8 million international students in comparison to 2 million in 2000. More than half of these international students were enrolled in different educational programs US, UK, Australia, France, Germany, and Russia. Leading countries that are sending international students are India, China, Germany, South Korea, Nigeria, France, Saudi Arabia, and several central Asian countries (UNESCO, 2018). Croatia is still receiving a very small number of international students, however, as this study suggests, it has certain attributes as a competitive advantage, especially in the private higher education sector, to become an attractive study abroad destination.

*Croatia as a Study Abroad Destination*

Croatia is still in the early stage of the student study abroad destination lifecycle; both looking at the number of students it receives as well as the number of students it sends abroad. By looking at EU countries, Croatia is in the last place in sending students abroad (only 1% of them) in comparing to other EU countries, where the EU average is 8% (Eurostat, 2018). According to UNESCO (2019) in the academic year 2018/2019, the total number of Croatian students who went to exchange is 9045 in comparison to the total number of students that came to study in Croatia is 693. This means that in every 9 student Croatia sends, it receives only one.

Croatian higher education encompasses 135 accredited higher education institutions. 28 of them are private, other are public. Out of these 135 institutions only 21 offer programs that are entirely taught in a foreign language, and only 12 of them offer programs in English (mostly private institutions). Most public higher education institutions offer only a small number of individual courses thought in a foreign language.

ZSEM currently has the highest proportion of international students (35%) in Croatia, making it an ideal case study. More so, ZSEM had a rise in the number of international students from 1 student in 2006 to 250 students in 2019 (ZSEM International Office, 2019). Most of the international students come from France, Canada, Mexico, and the Republic of Korea, followed by Germany, UK, Italy, China, Netherlands, and others. Most of these students (80%) spend one semester at ZSEM, where only 20% of them stay full year. Regarding the structure of programs, they enrolled in 2018/2019, 76% of them enrolled at baccalaureate degree programs, 19% of them to dual-degree programs and 5% on MBA programs.

Since ZSEM is currently leading higher education institution in welcoming international students in Croatia, this research aimed at discovering which are those attributes that are connected to VUCA working environment that attract students to choose ZSEM, and how can this further be used in branding ZSEM, as well as Croatia, as a student study abroad destination.

**Research Methodology**

This qualitative study aims to examine the potential of ZSEM, in using its specific approach to learning in the VUCA environment as a competitive advantage in future student study abroad destination branding strategies.

Three separate focus groups were conducted with students who have spent their international exchange at the ZSEM to gather their perceptions of the effectiveness of the pedagogy used on ZSEM and their key takeaways from their learning journey that are in detail explained in the section that follows. Focus group discussions were conducted with students that were on the international exchange on ZSEM at the end of the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. E-mails were sent to these students to solicit their willingness to participate in the focus groups. In total, 22 students took part in the focus group, out of which 12 were female and another 10 were male students. Among them, 3 students were in Year 2, 11 students were in Year 3, while 6 students were in their graduating year. They were all enrolled in the Bachelor of Economics and Management program. Two students were General MBA students.

These 22 students were split between three different focus groups, organized by a geographical area where their primary education is based. It was done so to see whether there are differences between them in discussions in terms of the benefits of ZSEM teaching methods as well as in their decision-making process to come and study in Croatia. Participants are in more detail explained in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Focus groups participants

| | Geographical Area | Countries | Program | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group 1 | Europe | Italy, Slovenia, France, Netherlands | Undergraduate and MBA | 8 |
| Group 2 | Asia | Singapore, Korea | Undergraduate | 6 |
| Group 3 | Americas/Canada | Mexico, Chile, Canada | Undergraduate | 8 |

Source: Authors research

As seen in Figure 1 above, the final sample included three focus groups. Group 1 (Europe) had eight participants, Group 2 (Asia) had six participants and Group 3 (Americas and Canada) had eight participants. Focus groups took place at the ZSEM between 25th and 30th March 2019, and ranged between 60 and 80 minutes, with an average of 70 minutes.

Each focus group was audio – recorded, after which the data was transcribed. Focus groups were conducted in the English language. As data need to be meaningfully analyzed (Liamputtong, 2009), each of the three focus groups were looked at independently and then compared and analyzed to create meaningful and properly organized data. Finally, comprehensive, and meaningful conclusions were made, presented in the discussion part of the research that follows. The transcripts were analyzed thematically where data emerging from the group discussions were grouped in terms of the beneficial outcomes of the ZSEM program and key components of the curriculum that higher education institutions should follow in the 21$^{st}$-century VUCA environment.

Ethical issues about this research were fully considered and were not violated. Firstly, the interviewed participants were adults belonging to non-vulnerable groups. Secondly, addressing the question of quality, integrity, and ethics, no sensitive questions were discussed. As focus groups were recorded, each participant was previously informed of the process of audio – recording and agreed to take part in the research. Finally, should the participant wish to stay anonymous, this decision was included in the approval form and was fully respected.

**Research Results and Discussion**

Focus groups responses revealed several common themes and often mirrored the literature review secondary data collection with regards to different factors influencing students' study abroad destination choice, especially in preparing them for the VUCA work environment. These main themes included main decision-making criteria both in the context of destination choice, as well as the choice of the higher education institution. Overall, all participants viewed ZSEM pedagogy methods effective in improving a student's learning experience. Topics that were constantly mentioned by students were examined in more depth and each discussed separately in the text that follows. Those are a multidisciplinary approach, collaboration between ZSEM and the local business community, project-based learning, and student monitoring. As discussed below in greater detail, students also believed that those were the most important and effective methods that ZSEM uses in teaching to prepare them and help them achieve a deeper understanding of materials and their implications in real-world situations.

**Multidisciplinarity**

Multidisciplinarity is considered important for student development at the ZSEM. That is why, within the existing curriculum, different departments work together in producing assignments together so students can work on the same assignment using inputs they receive from different angles, for example, Participant F argued:

*"What I liked here, is…, that, class lectures are combined with real time project, where we work for the same project as a part of few different courses together… For example in marketing management we produce strategic marketing plan, but to be able to produce it we use primary research that we are doing as a part of consumer behaviour class…Then it makes sense, I now understand the wider context of it and its application as well…"*

It is believed that learning in a multidisciplinary way helps students in overcoming a tendency to maintaining preconceived ideas, which results in a broader understanding of the issues (Repko, 2008). Multidisciplinary learning, therefore, requires students to think "across, beyond, and through the academic disciplines to encompass all types of knowledge about an idea, issue, or subject" (Ertas et al., 2003:289). This is if great importance for the VUCA work environment, as incorporating an interdisciplinary aspect in team project allowed students to apply what they learned in their course work to solve a real-world problem (Jiji, 2015).

**Collaboration between ZSEM and Business Community**

As a part of the learning pedagogy at the ZSEM, almost every subject needs to have some kind of collaboration with the business community. It does so through working on the case-studies with companies, having representatives from different fields to have guest lectures at ZSEM, and taking students to field trips and site inspections. For example, participant D argued:

*"I am happy that I enrolled Tourism course, it is for the first time I experienced so many visits to many stakeholders, many different ones….we saw Croatian National Theatre, Hotel Esplanade Zagreb, few hostels and Museum of Broken Relationships. As we are a small group, we literally meet all these people face-to-face, and they talk to us…individually…I got their business cards and they told me that I can contact them should I need any information, look for internship or so…I like that a lot…I felt respected and nice by this, …my classmates as well. This was the first thing I shared with my parents and friends at home…I mean…this story"*

This goes along with what Silva (2009) argued, that learning should be project-based and student–central where engagement with the community is very important. As Participant I argued:

*"We for example, work with real companies, we develop skills that allow us to use theory we get on classes…and imply it to the practical example…also, we get feedback from the company, which means a lot to us, and because it comes from the business people…then we understand how they see our work as well. It feels good…because I feel that when I get job, I will feel more comfortable because I had connection to business community already…we all, and my friends…see this as a big opportunity. I don't have this at my home University, I wish I did."*

Some of the students, on the other hand, said that it would be useful if business representatives came a few times more during the semester, for different inputs that would help them even further while working on the real project. As Fitzgerald et al. (2014) argued, not all knowledge resides in schools, and that there are many learning opportunities in the non-academic settings. More so, in the fast-changing VUCA environment, students need to learn beyond the textbooks in the classroom context to stay relevant as their knowledge may become obsolete quickly (Seow et al., 2019).

**Project–based Learning**

Participants pointed out that the learning pedagogy depends a lot on how ZSEM helps them to identify learning outcomes achieved through courses. Also, they argued that the outcome of project team-based learning depends a lot on a team that students are allocated to. Participant G outlined:

*"It is good to work on real project… because it is real… it is not pure theory…even if it is just talking to someone from company we work on the project for. This is… I believe… how skills for future are developed. Some groups had challenge with group members on project, but I guess it is also a part of learning process…how to handle a team…how to organize people in a team…how to solve problems with our team members…how to motivate (non)workers…and we learned that…we did it all in the end…"*

As problems connected to the VUCA environment have no clear solutions, most workers today do not work in silos, but in a team that is made up of people from different backgrounds. Therefore, successful workers in the increasingly diverse teams will need to be able to identify and communicate points of connection and use their differences to build good relationships and by that allow them to work together more effectively (Scott, 2015).

**Individual and Group Student Mentoring**

Mentoring is considered as a vehicle for enhancing involvement in learning and improving students' levels of academic achievement (Jacobi, 1991). It is doing so through several perspectives: (1) it helps in the growth of the individuals; (2) it includes assistance with professional and career development and role modelling; and (3) mentoring relationships are proven to be both personal and reciprocal (Crips and Cruz, 20019). For example, Participant K argued:

*"I am happy that I here can ask anything and they will all help me…I had few issues with my work, I always felt that I can ask for advice, and I always got it in less the 24 hours… My University is big, we don't have this kind of help, it is too much of us."*

Or, as Participant E suggested:

*"My friend and I were pleased to see that we were mentored and helped from our lecturers for one student conference we applied for… it helped us a lot. Also, my other friend did one case study competition…he was mentored as well. This means a lot to us… I mean… That we can ask…"*

Finally, all participants agreed that having been mentored, both individually and/or as a part of their teamwork, improved their learning experience, and they connect high quality mentoring to a small number of students in groups, where lecturers know them very well, as Participant D suggested:

*"I like young universities. It's like you have to grow ... you push. Croatia is growing; universities are growing, so people are maybe not to mainstream. Ok, I am going to London, London is maybe expensive, competitive and many things. But maybe you can do much more making much familiar environment. I think that small universities are much better than bigger".*

They all agreed that they like teaching methods on ZSEM and that in smaller groups professors are more approachable and show that they care for them. Finally, they believed that it increased their competence and confidence crucial for their success in the future VUCA work environment.

**Zagreb as a Student Study Abroad Destination**

In general, students agreed that Zagreb has a great potential in becoming a popular University city, referring to Zagreb as a "small Bologna". They all mostly agreed that living costs in Zagreb are very affordable. They all enjoy Zagreb's lifestyle - food, restaurants, and it's coffee culture. They like the central location of Zagreb, as it is convenient for them to travel while studying. They mentioned that there are not enough low-cost airlines and that busses could be more convenient. For example, participant A explained:

*"Because we are students, we are supported from our parents, so we have to think about costs, the price of the country. The Eastern Europe may be cheaper than other parts of Europe, I think, ... so I chose Eastern Europe".*

Some of the cultural shocks they encountered surprisingly came from EU students who said that they were shocked by everyday practices of Croats such as heavy smoking, crazy driving and paying everything by cash. When asked about Croatia as University recognizable country, all students agreed that it is not, as it has a very bad overall ranking, as Participant B suggested:

*"I did consider doing a masters here, it's just I am not sure how credible this master form Zagreb would be (...) I can't comment a lot but feel it's about ranking. Not many people know Croatia, Zagreb as university town. Just coming here to see the country".*

What they added is that Zagreb is not very opened for diversity, as Participant F said: *"Zagreb is touristic, but not international."*

As students described, Zagreb is "fun, relax, coffee culture, new university city, nice lifestyle, a good place to live in as a student, human-size city, pretty and cheap". In the end, Participant B added:

*"I think you are emerging country, more developed than others. I think it is interesting to see how it is developing, from past and that is kind of difficult. I think Croatia is imposing itself to be the leader in whole area, I mean the Balkans, and it's interesting to see how you mange to do that. I think it's maybe thanks to tourism, don't know, ... but I think that the rest is less developed than Croatia".*

**Conclusion**

This paper examined how international students perceive learning pedagogy that is used at the ZSEM to prepare them for work skills they will need in the VUCA environment, and how these can be used for future branding of both ZSEM and Croatian (private) higher education institutions as a student study abroad destination. Students who have completed their international exchange experience on ZSEM reported a positive perception of the effectiveness of the learning pedagogy adopted at the ZSEM, as well as a nice lifestyle they had while living in Zagreb.

Overall, the findings indicated that having a multidisciplinary approach to curriculum design, collaboration with the business community, project-based learning and student mentoring enabled students to use their knowledge and ideas adapting them and being flexible to changes, which is crucial for their future VUCA environment. Students emphasized that they did not even know that they will encounter such an approach to teaching here and that it would be valuable to use this information in ZSEM promotional materials. Also, research showed that there are many other positive attributes that can be used for future promotional materials, along with preparing them for VUCA world and these are: (1) centrality of Croatian geographical location; (2) Croatia as an emerging country, EU member, is seen as both safe and interesting for students, as they said *"experiencing something different, but not too different"*; (3) for majority of students, Croatia is affordable destination; and (4) Croatia is perceived as a perfect destination for the international exchange but has shown to be unattractive for the full time study because of the perception of the overall low ranked universities in Croatia.

Finally, it would also be beneficial for the higher education institutions to approach the process of attracting international students more thoroughly not only because of the potential these activities have as a source of additional revenue but also as a means of increasing cultural diversity within educational environments which can be seen as one of the ingredients needed for cross-cultural skills development in the VUCA environment. This means that in the short-term universities should, of course, focus at attracting short-term international exchange students. However, for the long term success, the overall ranking of Croatian universities must be improved should Croatia wish to be recognized as a high quality higher education destination, and by that be more competitive on the higher education market for attracting full-time students.

**Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

Considering the research methodology and methods used, this research has its limitations. Data was collected at one business school in Croatia, specifically Zagreb. Therefore, researching with a larger sample of international students studying in various locations in Croatia could be one of the future avenues for research. Also, students who took part in focus groups were international exchange students, where this research should be extended to full time international students studying in Croatia. Moreover, further research projects could attempt to highlight the differences between public and private higher education institutions.

**Acknowledge**

I wish to acknowledge the help provided by Professor Tijana Rakić for reviewing earlier versions of this article.

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# VISITOR PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL PARK KRKA

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**ABSTRACT**

*Understanding visitor structure, preferences and perceptions plays an essential role in developing marketing and management strategies in protected areas. Visitor survey in the National Park Krka have investigated demographics-structure, motivation, satisfaction, and perception of various variables enabling an array of correlations. One of them was the analyzing 19 satisfaction variables to gain better understanding of the perception generating image of pristine nature versus excursion site. The largest effect sizes on satisfaction variables between these two groups, were found for:*

- *overall satisfaction with the park,*
- *fulfilment of visiting motives and*
- *the number of other visitors in the Park,*

*where the satisfaction on these elements of visitors perceiving the park as a place of pristine nature dominates over the satisfaction of the other group.*

*This sort of understanding can help improve versatile tasks of parks' management: conservation, leisure, information, and education. Furthermore, parks can use this approach to steer away from unwanted perception by introducing measures to reduce crowding, trampling and more so informing/educating. Since the NP Krka is entering a cycle of investment in infrastructure and interpretation the changes of visitor structure, perception, motivation and satisfaction could be monitored in order to assess the management decisions and create more focus on the demand side.*

**Keywords:** *Visitor survey, protected area management, National Park Krka*

## Introduction on protected areas and tourism

Nature remains the strongest pull factor for recreation, visitation, and tourism. This is rooted in the fact that spending time in forests, parks, or pristine wildlife many consider to be one of basic needs that is backed by vast research proving noticeable health benefits.

National parks and other nature protected areas have the dual mandate of nature conservation whilst still being social spaces. This entails a main challenge to monitor health of ecosystems and have satisfied visitors that finance the conservation operations.

A quAlity research that was looking at the causal relationship between service quality, visitor satisfaction and loyalty showed that ranger presence and provision of information had an effect and that further research on causal effects is needed (Rodger at al 2015).

Regarding motivation, a research by Budeanu disclosed that 70–80% tourists claim high levels of concern of their holidays' environmental impact, but only cca. 10% make purchasing decisions in relation to the concern (Budeanu, 2007). It can illustrate a central question in regard to (tourism) sustainability behavior: the reluctantly to change one’s behavior to support sustainability goals that has been confirmed by three European Commission research (2015a, 2015b, 2016).

Protected areas in Croatia have been playing an increasing role in providing venue for tourists as their accessibility, availability and interpretation content improves. National parks have dominantly been playing a role of attractor and provider of day trips, i.e. excursions. Long standing surveying of tourist in Croatia (Marušić at al 2017) shows continuous satisfaction and attraction of tourist with scenic nature, but more in-depth analysis of relationships between groups of visitors and protected areas remain under researched.

Responsible ministry has been placing effort to design Action plans for visitor management with the goal to manage visitor flows and provide for them new contents in form of visitor centers, information points, educational and recreational trails (more info https://www.parkovihrvatske.hr/naslovnica). Managing visiting process is crucial not only for the reason of mitigating environmental risks but also to enable sustainable financial sources of operations of protected areas.

Hence managing visitors and their perceptions, motivations and satisfaction are coming under the spot lite as recent activities of the National Park Krka illustrate. Namely the two studies providing valuable insight in advancing management issues have been conducted in 2019:

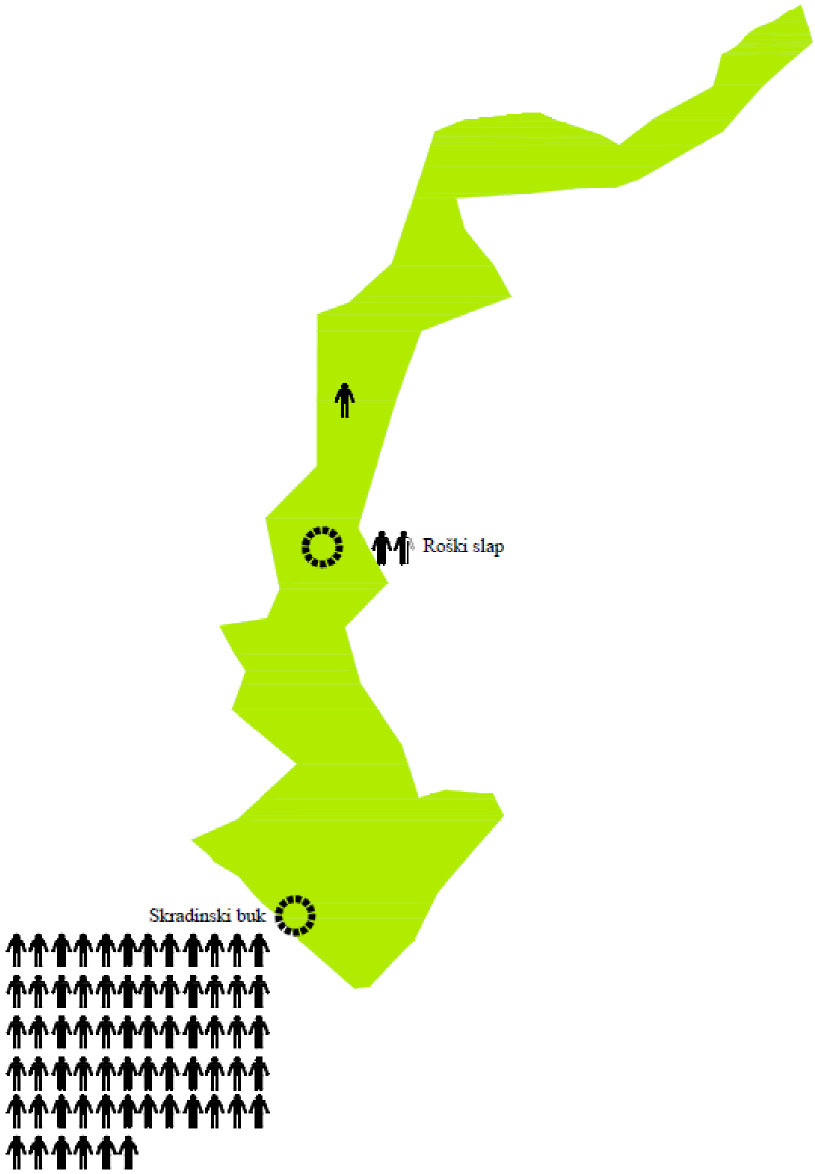
1. Structure and motivation of visitors in the National Park Krka by Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park.
2. Visitor management study by Grgurević & partneri d.o.o, Institute for tourism, Institute Ruđer Bošković and ADIPA

Visitor behavior and motivation are known to be related to visitor perception, which is the focus of this paper. For instance, Petrosillo and her coworkers (2007) put in evidence that a different perception can be due to environmental and park related attitudes, but also to the profile of visitors who frequent protected areas. This paper will explore visitor perception of Krka national park and investigate relationships between perception and several features related to visitor sociodemographic characteristics, visitor motivation, stay in the park and visitor satisfaction. The approach was inspired by environmental psychology and human geography studies which point to the perception of a space by the individual as a key factor in understanding human behavior within that space (Jones 2000, Biran et.al.,2006).

### The context

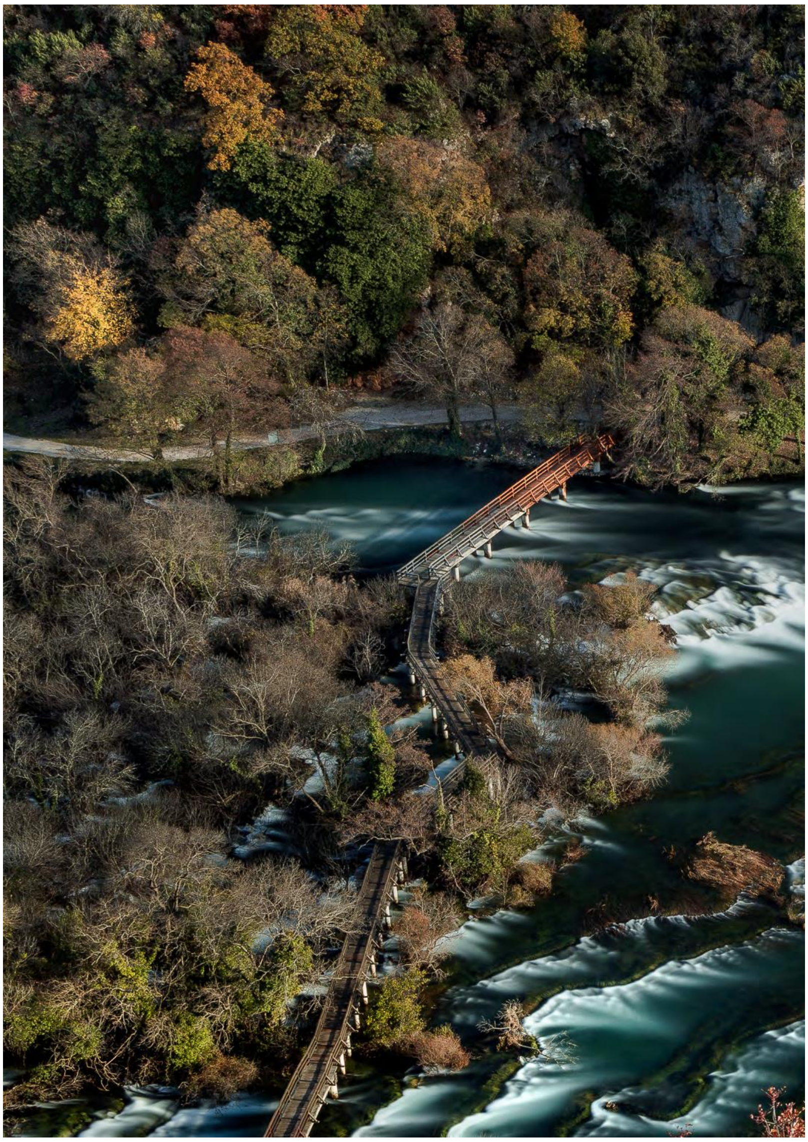
Krka National Park (NPK) is a natural and karst phenomenon covering 109 $km^2$, with seven travertine waterfalls of Krka river and one of the most visited National parks in Croatia and south-east Europe, and probably central Europe as well. It receives more than one million visitors annually, mostly during the summer months, that spend their time in 0.3 $km^2$ area of attractive waterfall Skradinski buk while only 5% of visitors explore other locations up stream.

Figure 1. Spatial distribution of visitors in the NP Krka. 1 figure = 5.000 visitors




Source: Grgurević i partneri doo, 2019.

**Figure 2**. Oficial promotion of NPK is illustrated with photos without people on it. Dominated by panoramas and scenic solitudes



Source: Brochure *Nacionalni park Krka – otkrijte neponomljivu moć prirode*, 2019. p.80

Before visiting NPK, the visitors have expectations based on promotion that communicate NPK as more on the side of pristine nature than excursion site(s). This expectation remains to be investigated in future and look more detailed into an effect of reasons for declaring NPK location of visit as excursion site rather than pristine nature. Some of causes could be:

- arriving during more crowded periods;
- declaring oneself as more "strict" nature lover;
- having social standards that require more personal space, i.e. less crowded use of public space;
- other issues that shape a person as more sensitive (noise, need for introspection, etc).

**Figure 3.** Seasonal crowds at Skradinski buk

Source: Duško Jaramaz/PIXSELL, 2018. https://lokalni.vecernji.hr/zupanije/np-krka-uvodi-nove-mjere-ogranicit-ce-kupanje-na-skradinskom-buku-9049

The research conducted during 2018 by Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park (2019) was extensive and constructed to cover motivation, sociodemographic data, satisfaction thus allowing for potential correlations.

The work presented here is presenting selection of finding and analysis to:

1. potentially disclose obvious discrepancies and inform management
2. allow for future research to more precisely define and capture expectations in realms of: motivation, background, personal aspirations, social standards, etc.

**Survey methodology**

Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park designed the research with the objective to obtain reliable, representative, qualitative, and quantitative information on the structure, attitudes and characteristics of the arrival and stay of visitors in NP Krka. Among other, the surveying gathered sociodemographic visitor characteristics, visitor motivation and sources of information; visitor arrival information and information about their stay and activities in the park, information about the frequency of visit to the park and other protected areas; visitor's satisfaction with nineteen different elements; revisiting intention, willingness on recommendation and visitor park perception. The paradata collected through the interview were related to timing and location. Two main visitor categories, individual visitors, and group visitors were distinguished prior to data collection and the analysis in this paper examines only individual visitors.

Data collection included a stratified sample designed based on the number of sold entrance tickets in three previous years (2015 – 2017) and data from a survey conducted in the previous year (2017). Through F2F interviews and CAPI partially applied visitors were interviewed in the period July – October 2018., on 4 different exit points for two popular locations in the park: Skradinski buk and Roški slap. The questionnaire was developed according to relevant literature and according to NP Krka management needs, mostly relying on TOMAS research[14]. The questionnaire was translated in 13 languages which contributed to lower rejection rate in survey participation and resulted with interviewed visitors from 57 countries.

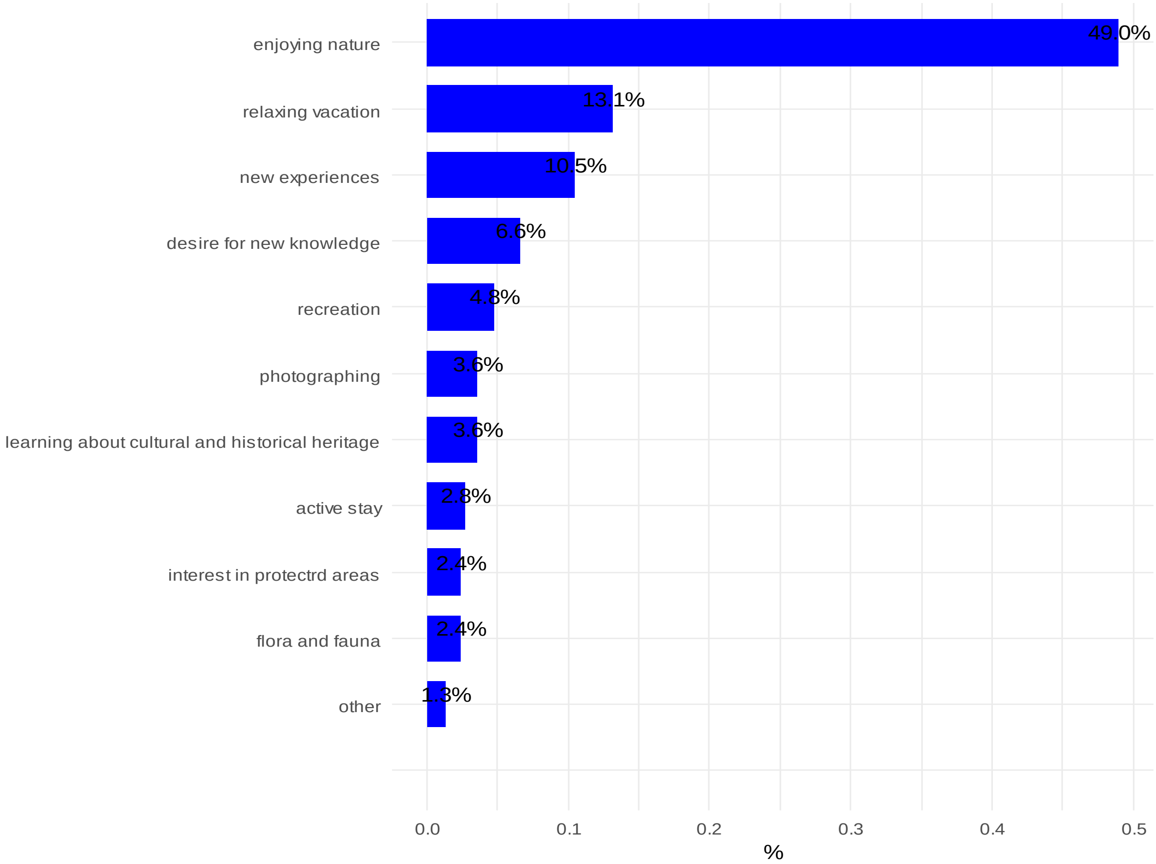
In order to determine main differences among visitors perceiving the park as an excursion site and those perceiving the park as a pristine nature site, univariate and bivariate analysis was performed. This included nonparametric Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test, chi-square test and univariate logistic regression. Due to the problem of multiple testing, Bonferroni correction was applied. The effect size measures, namely Cohen's w and Cliff's Delta were used to reveal features having the highest discriminative power. The analysis is performed using R Statistical Software.

**Results**

Based on the findings (see below) that illustrate that 49% of visitors were motivated with "staying in and enjoying nature" and a fact that NP Krka was perceived as an "excursion" location by 60% raises a dilemma that will have to be researched in future with more focused and precise questions: For those visitors that hold nature as strong attractor – will they assessed NP Krka as excursion, instead pristine nature site, due to higher expectations and "disappointment" to their expectations. Moreover, is it possible to single out important factors related to visitor perception of NP Krka?

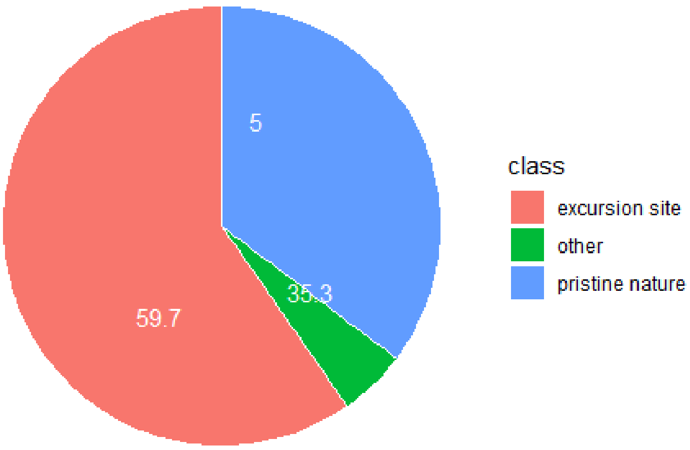
[14] Since 1987 Institute for Tourism is conducting a research on tourist demand for summer tourism titled Survey on attitudes and expenditures of tourists in Croatia – TOMAS Summer. The research has been conducted eleven times in the thirty-year period and represents a long-standing, highly valuable source of information for tourism management. The TOMAS Summer Survey is conducted in all coastal counties in Croatia and thus allowing a comparative analysis. The TOMAS research expanded over time from summer, holiday tourism and other segments of tourist demand such as nautical tourism, including yachting, cruising and protected areas.

**Figure 4.** Visitor primary travel motive




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

**Figure 5.** Visitor perception

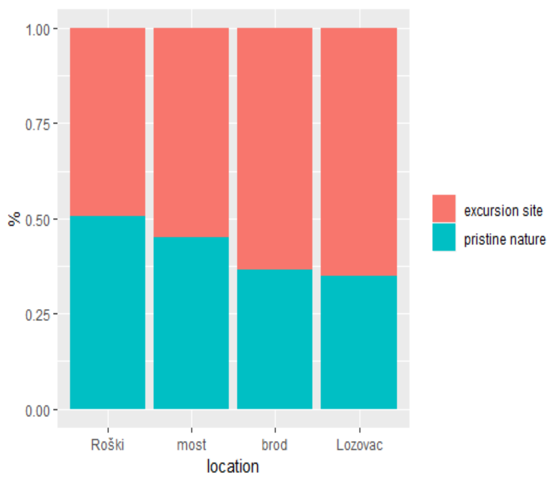



Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park in 2018.

Visitors were categorized based on their park perception where park perception was investigated by a closed-ended multiple-choice question with three options: *excursion site*, *pristine nature*, and *other*. Most individual visitors (60%) consider the park as an excursion site, followed by 35% of visitors considering the park as a pristine nature site and 5% of visitors selecting the option *other.* The categorization of visitors based on their park perception was performed by forming two groups: visitors perceiving the park as an *excursion site* and the second group of visitors perceiving the park as a *site of pristine nature*. The following results are related only to individual visitors. After performing visitor categorization and data cleansing, the dataset encompassed 1776 questionnaires.

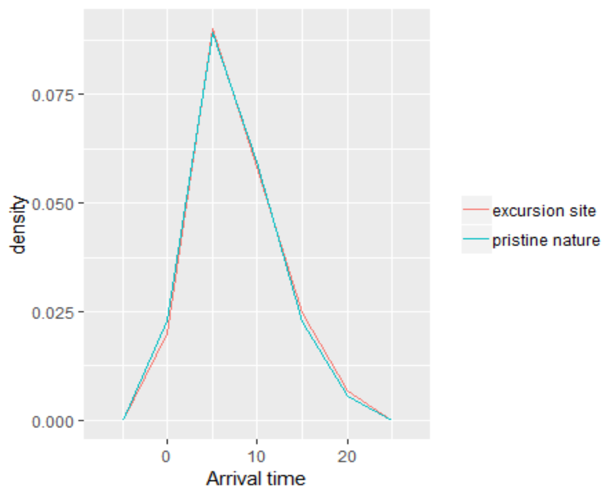
As previously noted, visitors were interviewed on 4 different exit points in the park. An interesting result is that visitor perception significantly differs due to the location ($p<0.01$). visitors interviewed on location Roški slap perceive the park as pristine nature site in a significantly higher proportion than visitors interviewed on exit points related to Skradinski buk location, especially for two most crowded exit points Lozovac and the boat exit point. Still, the location effect size is weak ($w=0.1$).

**Figure 6.**Visitor perception and location




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

**Figure 7.** Visitor perception and arrival time

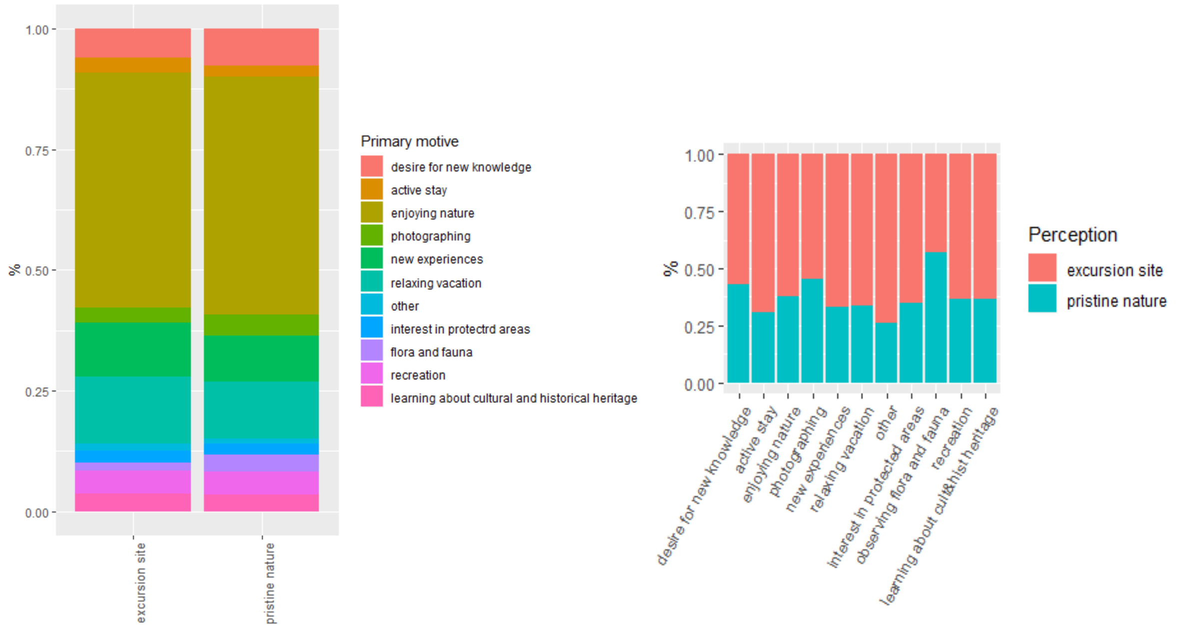



Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

Visitors were asked to denote all the motives related to their park visit and afterwards to mark the most important (primary) motive of their visit. Both visitor populations share the same main primary travel motives: enjoying nature, relaxing vacation and new experiences as presented on Figure 5.

Although visitor park perception is not significantly related to primary travel motives ($p>0.1$), visitors motivated by observing flora and fauna perceive the Park as pristine nature in a greater extent. This is the only visitor group with most visitors (57%) perceiving the park as pristine nature.

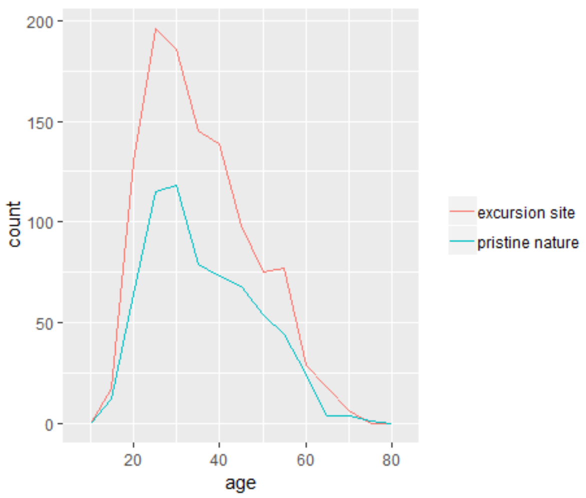
**Figure 8.** Visitor primary travel motive and perception




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

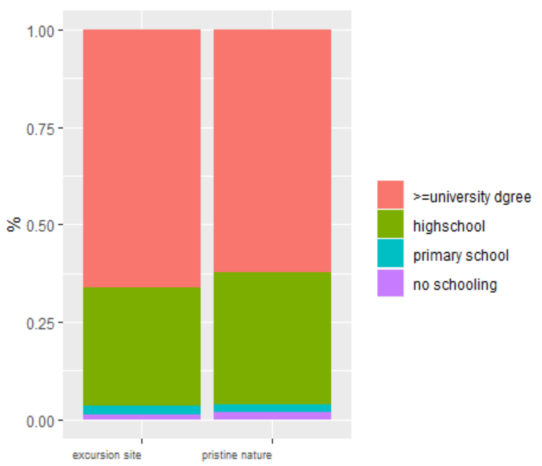
Three demographic variables were analyzed: visitor age, education level and country of residence. Five most frequent countries of residence are the same in both groups: Germany, Poland, France, United Kingdom and Italy. No significant relationship between visitor age and perception, nor visitor educational level and perception was found (p>0.1).

**Figure 9.** Visitor age




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park in 2018.

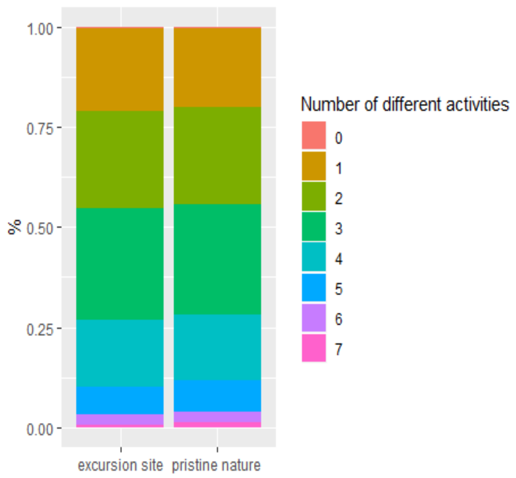
**Figure 10.** Visitor educational level




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park in 2018.

Protected sites visiting frequency is not significantly related to visitor perception (p>0.1). For both groups, around 39% of visitors in both groups stated that this is their first time in a protected area. Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between visitor perception and visitor activity in the park, observed in terms of number of activities (p>0.1) and number of different locations visited (p>0.1). In both groups, more than 80% of visitors visited less than 3 locations in the park and most of the visitors were involved in 3 or less activities. The most frequent activities were photographing, swimming and hiking.

**Figure 11.** Number of different activities




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

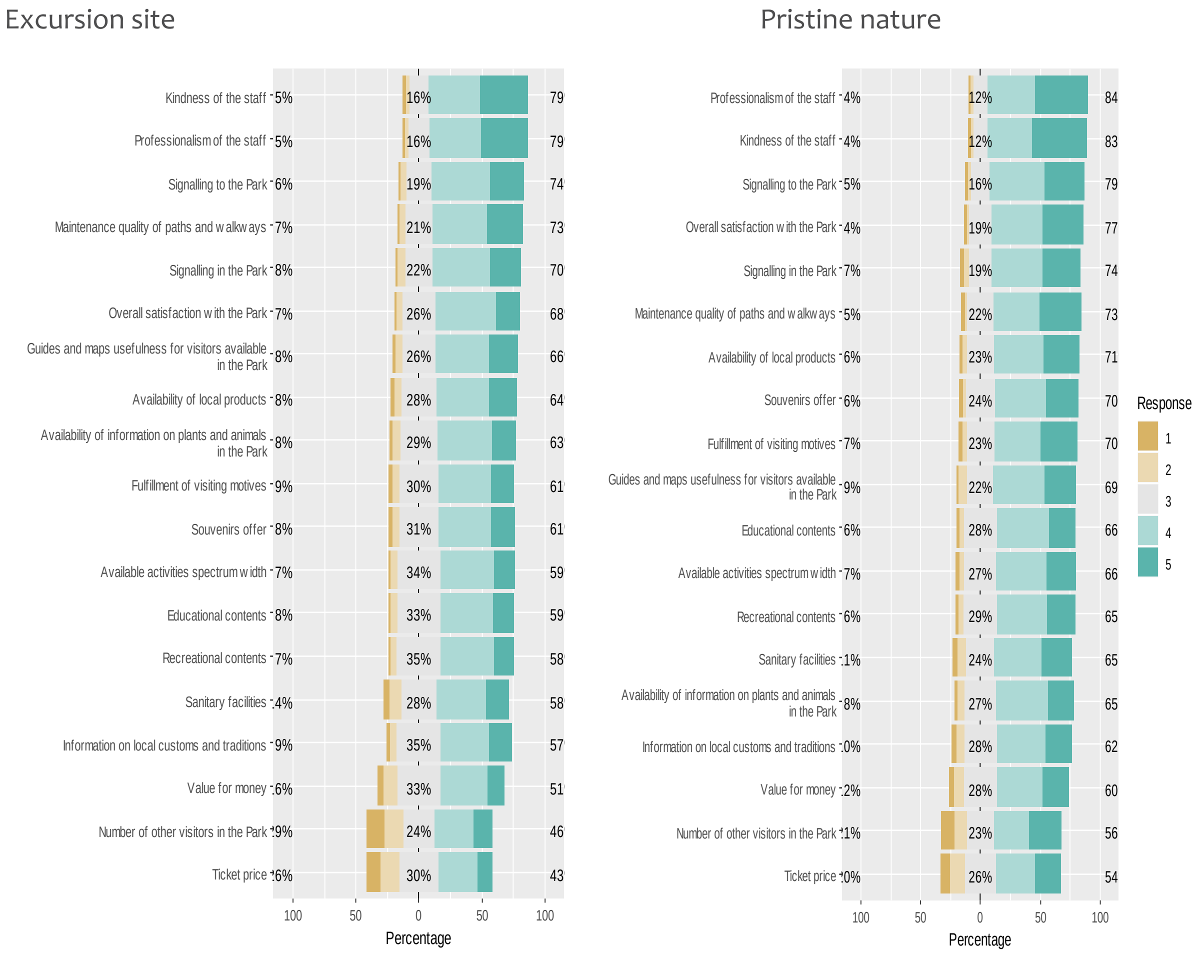
**Table 1.** Type of different activities in the Park

| Type of activity | Excursion place | Pristine nature |
|---|---|---|
| Photographing | 71% | 70% |
| Swimming | 63% | 56% |
| Hiking | 59% | 61% |
| Picnic | 17% | 16% |
| Exploring flora and fauna | 15% | 20% |
| Boat trip | 12% | 15% |
| Cycling | 11% | 10% |
| Climbing | 10% | 11% |
| Educating about cultural and historical heritage | 10% | 13% |
| Dining in restaurants | 7% | 8% |

Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

Satisfaction on 19 different satisfaction variables between visitors perceiving the park as an excursion site and visitors perceiving the park as a site of untouched were compared. Visitors rated their level of satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- very unsatisfied to 5- very satisfied. Staff professionalism and staff kindness are two best rated elements in both groups, while ticket price and number of other visitors in the park are two elements with the lowest mean satisfaction levels in both groups. The mean satisfaction level for all elements is lower for the group of visitors perceiving the park as an excursion site. Significant difference in satisfaction level between these two groups was found for: souvenirs offer, availability of local products, sanitary facilities, number of other visitors in the Park, fulfilment of visiting motives, ticket price, value for money and overall satisfaction with the Park.

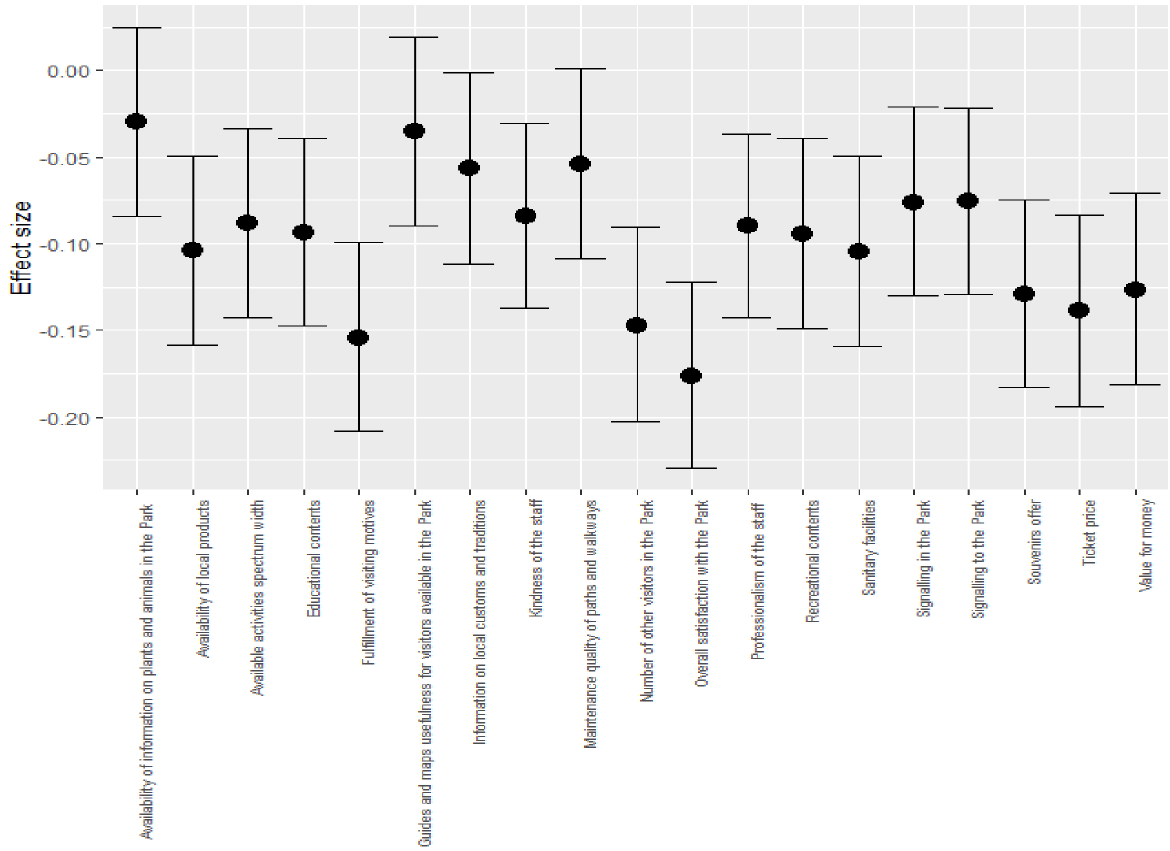
**Figure 12.** Satisfaction variables and perception




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

The effect size was measured with Cliff's Delta. The largest effect sizes on satisfaction variables between these two groups, although small in magnitude, were found for overall satisfaction with the park, fulfilment of visiting motives and for the number of other visitors in the Park, where the satisfaction on these elements of visitors perceiving the park as a site of pristine nature dominates over the satisfaction of the other group.

**Figure 13.** Satisfaction effect sizes




Source: Polytechnic of Šibenik and Krka National Park, 2018.

**Conclusion**

This paper focused on analyzing main differences in perception of visitors in protected area, divided according to their perception in two groups. It is important to note that the analysis was performed upon data collected from a survey and unfortunately it was not preliminary designed. This is considered both a main drawback of this work but also an opportunity to improve survey design, targeting more precisely priority issues.

Purposes of surveying, not only for NP Krka but also for others in similar position, should be also directed toward those visitors that hold nature as the strong motivator and driver – exploring to what extent their higher "pristine nature" expectations resulted in the "disappointment" due to crowding, seasonality and other annoyances and unfulfilled expectations.

Because some destinations are preferred by tourists for their attractiveness of nature, it does not necessarily imply a visitor's concern or sensitivity for ecosystem health. Therefore, when designing surveying, a closer consideration of demand (niches, groups, sensitivities) should be incorporated.

In relation to the parks' goals, the surveying would also need to measure the clarity and quality of park's efforts to communicate key messages and values. Especially from the perspective of the planned (ongoing for National Park Krka) investments in interpretation and education content and infrastructure. Also, to be kept in consideration is that the visitor niches are evolving and diversifying.

The analysis conducted in this work is an introductory and exploratory analysis of visitor perception in Krka National Park relying on bivariate relationships examination. The analysis performed did not show any significant relationship between visitor perception and features related to visitor sociodemographic characteristics, motivation or stay in the park. However, visitors having different park perception experience the park in a different way resulting with different satisfaction levels. This is especially pronounced for the overall satisfaction with the park, fulfilment of visiting motives and for the number of other visitors in the Park.

Furthermore, the results show that visitor perception depends on the location of visit. Skradinski buk is the main location and as such more crowded with visitors and facilities (souvenir shops, catering, etc) and as such perceived as an excursion site in a statistically larger extent than the less visited Roški slap location. To detect determinants of visitor park perception it is advisable to perform multivariable analysis taking into account possible multicollinearity and variable intercorrelation on data gathered from specialized questionnaires. This could reveal and explain underlying determinants related to park perception and contribute to more informed decision-making.

Last, but not least, the methods of effective monitoring spatial and temporal distribution of visitors should be disclosed and employed so surveying can target specific context such as crowding, weather conditions, preferred activities, etc.

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# A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POSSIBILITIES TO INCLUDE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES IN CROATIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*The right of dignity and equality of all people in the world has been established in the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948). But, since the 1980s it has begun to be pointed out that there are still some marginalized categories of population who are discriminated in their rights due to their physical or psychological limitations. One of the rights in which persons with disabilities (PwD) have been rejected was the right to travel. The potential of this specific segment of demand has been recognised in the tourism industry, as a new type of tourism, titled 'accessible tourism'.*

*This article explores the development of the accessible tourism (AT) in the European Union (EU), where PwD and elderly people are recognised as the leading tourism segments among other tourists with reduced mobility, health problems and other limitations (in hearing, seeing, speaking etc.) who are included in AT. Despite the generally positive attitudes in society about AT, it is not developing at the same rate in all EU Member States. To illustrate this statement, the case study of the youngest EU Member State, Croatia is applied.*

*The main aim of this paper is to identify the most important barriers to the development of AT in Croatia. Furthermore, this paper aims to underline the importance of this, relatively new type of tourism in Croatia seeing that this particular segment of demand has been much more ignored, marginalized and insufficiently included in tourism activities compared to the most EU Member States. According to conducted primary research among residents with disabilities (RwD) in Croatia, there are physical and financial barriers as the main obstacles to the inclusion of local PwD in tourism trips in Croatia. Such negligence of tourism development for RwD appears as a problem in positioning Croatia at demanding international tourism market of AT that is well developed in some other countries of EU. The article concludes with an appeal to the tourism industry in Croatia to develop AT offer so it can be attractive for all tourists with special access needs.*

***Keywords**: persons with disabilities, accessible tourism, barriers to the accessible tourism, European Union, Croatia*

## Introduction

Although all people were given the right of dignity and equality, which was established in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights immediately after World War II (in 1948) (UN, 1948), the UN experts did not put the focus on the certain marginalized categories of the population whose rights are discriminated and neglected due to their physical or psychological limitations since 1980s. It took the UN over a half a century to adopt their Convention on the Rights of PwD (UN, 2008). Other international organizations, non-governmental and non-profit associations and individuals started to recognize the needs and potentials of these persons and treat them with much more empathy. This process was led by the European Commission of the EU and the UNWTO because one of the rights of such persons, which had been denied, is the right to participate in tourist travels. The tourism industry has recognized the potential of this specific segment of tourism demand and this specific type of tourism was titled *accessible tourism*.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the EU has begun to co-fund special programs in tourism, designed for this specific market segment, and it has resulted in an improvement in the appropriate tourist supply including facilities, equipment, and staff training tailored to their needs. Although there are positive reactions in society, especially in the EU, this type of tourism is not developing equally in all EU Member States. One of the examples is the case of Croatia, where AT is in its initial phase of development. Question is, what are the main reasons for such underdevelopment of tourism offer for PwD and other segments of demand in AT?

The society is not aware that disability is an integral part of human life. Some persons are born with impairment while others acquired them during childhood or adult because of accident, ill-health or ageing, which is more common (Kitching, 2014). According to Burchart's research (2003) conducted in the UK, only 11% of the UK citizens were born with a disability. Each person, at a certain stage of their life, sooner or later, depending on various circumstances, may become less mobile and/or be exposed to the risk of some other form of disability (vision, hearing, etc.) due to health problems (illness, traffic accident or accident at work, etc.). Disability status can be a temporary condition or a permanent status (Darcy & Dickson, 2009) and can be extremely diverse (Kitching, 2014). Rusac (2011) distinguishes three groups of people who have limited access to the usual life activities: persons with a handicap, persons with reduced mobility and persons with functional limitations. These persons have reduced ability to perform daily activities that ensure adequate quality of life and include biological, psychological, and social functioning. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) disability is complex, dynamic, and multidimensional (WHO & World Bank, 2011) concept. This is highlighted in seniors, because they have a higher risk of disability due to lower mobility, chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, rheumatism, sciatica, arthritis, blindness, deafness, asthma, dementia, paralysis caused by stroke, etc. Luiza (2010) has pointed out that there is a positive correlation between ageing and disabilities, as a person is 14 times more likely to have a disability by the time they reach 65 years old than a four-year-old person. Eagles (2004) indicates that there are two types of seniors, well seniors and unwell seniors. The former ones are fit, healthy and capable to travel, while the second ones have a disability that negatively affects daily activities. A national survey in Canada found that the onset of a major disability on average occurs at the age of 73 suggesting that the age break between these two groups occurs at this age. As people are getting older, their needs increase for supplementary facilities such as wheelchair ramps and other access help. Unlike this author, the UNWTO experts claim that old age starts at 60 years of age (UNWTO, 2016a), but all the authors agree that this is determined by the individual's health condition.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines PwD as people who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various external barriers, may underestimate their full, effective and equal participation in society with others (UN, 2008). Article 30 of the CRPD specifically identifies the rights of the PwD in cultural life, recreation, leisure, sport and tourism (Darcy, 2012).

Till the 1980s tourism industry marginalised the PwD and discouraged them from buying tourism products. Tourist needs and wishes of this market segment were completely unsatisfied and neglected because it has been assumed that PwD, due to their limitations and lower motivation, were not interested in tourism trips, which was completely wrong approach (Loi & Kong, 2017). It is important to mention that these people have the same tourism desires and needs as other social groups (Yau, McKercher & Packer, 2004). PwD, as well as any other persons, desire to travel, but in general, tourism products and services are not designed for their needs (Mahmoudzadeh & Sarjaz, 2018).

The term 'disabled persons involved in tourist movements' sometimes unintentionally identify only tourists with certain physical, psychological and other disabilities, which is very narrow approach (Kitching, 2014). Much wider approach includes in that group ones with physical impairments (e.g. wheelchair users) as well as those with sensory, learning, and mental impairments (Loi & Kong, 2017). In addition, in this group of tourists, these authors include persons that temporarily suffer from injuries caused by an accident (at work, in traffic etc.), parents carrying strollers, travellers with heavy luggage, families with children or the elders.

According to the UNWTO, group of 'handicapped tourists' include much broader approach. Except persons with physical impairments, sensory, learning, and mental impairments, all other individuals who may have difficulties with movement and/or various health problems such as obese, pregnant women, asthmatic and similar persons could be include in the group. Also, there are overweight people, extremely short or tall people, people who have just had an operation, people that are using crutches, people carrying heavy or big luggage or other heavy objects or pushing prams or buggies, small children etc. (UNWTO, 2016). All these persons participate in AT. According to Bidu & Devi (2016) AT is available for a person with limited mobility, but also for individuals with sensory disabilities, learning disabilities or chronic diseases. Among these persons, PwD and elderly people are the leading segments of demand in AT.

The European Network for AT (ENAT) refers to AT as the set of services and facilities (such as physical environment, transportation, information, communication) which enables persons with special access to enjoy a holiday and leisure, and spend their time with no particular barrier or problem (EC, 2014).

All recent researches in the world, and especially in the EU, show a growing and positive trend of AT with numerous benefits for all those tourist destinations that have an offer tailored to previously mentioned group of tourists.

### Methodology

In this paper, desk and primary research were used. For desk research key sources of secondary data included a literature review examining AT and involvement of the PwD in tourism. Furthermore, method of descriptive statistics was used to compare stages of AT development in the EU Member Countries, as well as to identify characteristics of tourism travels of PwD in the world, the EU and in the Croatia.

Furthermore, the method of primary research was realised in two stages. In the first stage the semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted, while in the second stage the results from the in-depth interview were interpreted using a qualitative method. Interview was realised by two different groups of respondents. The first group was conducted among Croatian RwD, and the second one with the owner of a travel agency which is currently the only tourism intermediary in Croatia specialized for the organization of travel for PwD.

First phase of primary research included the method of semi-structured in-depth interview among PwD. This method was chosen because PwD might be very distrustful, withdrawn, reserved and introverted. Specifically, in-depth interview is a primary research method that is used to explore attitudes, feelings, and/or motives which are not commonly explored in standard surveys that use the questionnaires (Marušić, Prebežac & Mikulić, 2019). The main research obstacle was to make contact with them and stimulate them to participate in the research. To achieve representative heterogeneous samples, consent for the interview was disseminated by emails, Facebook messages or by direct phone calls to 60 PwD with different level of physical disability, different level of education and age, and from different regions of Croatia. Although the anonymous character of the research, only 10 persons from the cities of Zagreb, Velika Gorica, Mursko Središće and Varaždin accepted to participate in it (Vuković, 2018). The interviews were conducted during the June 2017 and took place at the locations where respondents felt comfortable, like their homes. Interviews were based on a list of 18 open-ended questions, followed by many sub-questions and remarks. The focus was on motivation for travel, barriers for travel, preferred accommodation, and other characteristics of travel, as well as impressions on public sector support for PwD, and PwD travels. Each interview was recorded by a mobile phone and lasted at least an hour. A transcript was written from the verbatim soundtrack, with more than eight hours spent per one audio recording. Afterwards, transcripts of participant's opinions and attitudes from the interviews were subject of the qualitative analysis, and they were interpreted anonymously. For this phase of the research, the recommended method of qualitative content analysis (Riley & Love, 2000) was applied. Qualitative content analysis was applied through the open and axial coding process. Open coding refers to the process of generating initial categories from data, while through axial coding categories and their related subcategories and concepts were refined to form more precise explanations (Costa, Breda, Pinho, Bakas & Durão, 2016). In open-coding, certain categories of responses have been identified and it has been established which ones are the most represented among them. In the axial coding was analysed the most interesting findings from the research.

The second group of interview was conducted with the owner of the travel agency also in July 2017, for which the same research methods were used as for the RwD (recording by mobile phone, converting the audio recording into a transcript, and finally qualitative analysis).

**Demand for accessible tourism in the EU and characteristics of PwD on tourism trips**

It is not negligible that the PwD take around one-sixth in the world population. According to the WHO research conducted in 2011, there are more than a billion people worldwide with some form of disability, which is about 15% of the world population. Moreover, according to the World Health Survey around 785 million (15.6%) persons, 15 years and older live with a disability, while the Global Burden of Disease estimates a figure of around 975 million (19.4%) persons in the world (WHO & World Bank, 2011) in 2011.

Due to the fact that a number of people in the world is growing, it follows that a number of PwD is influenced by this trend. The number of the PwD in the world in 2011 was higher than the previous WHO estimations from the 1970s when the share of these people in the total population was estimated at 10% (WHO & World Bank, 2011). In addition, the prevalence of disability is argued to be growing worldwide, in parallel with population ageing and increasing incidence of chronic health conditions (Kitching, 2014).

In the EU, the proportion of PwD is higher than the world average. According to the European health and social integration survey (EHSIS) from 2012, in the EU were 73.5 million PwD aged 15 and more, which is equal to 18% of the total population 15+, with different share according countries: from the highest share in Hungary (25%) to the lowest in Malta (12%) (Eurostat, 2019).

Nevertheless, AT was estimated to be 12% of the total European tourism market in the year of 2012. These figures include a large proportion of senior travellers, the PwD and families with small children. In total, these three segments were estimated at 27% of the total population of European citizens (UNWTO, 2016b). The number of PwD in the EU will continue to grow due to the inevitable process of demographic change as half of them are over 65 (ENAT, 2007). It is expected that, by 2020, approximately 120 million Europeans will have a disability because the EU population is getting older (EC, 2017).

People with special access needs (including PwD and elderly people that are two leading tourist segments in EU for AT) took about 783 million trips in 2012. Among all the EU member states: France, the UK and Germany are the top markets for AT, taking both domestic and intra-EU travel into account (Table 1). By 2020, demand for AT will continue to increase to about 862 million trips in the EU. Total population of people with assess needs (PwD and elderly population) in the EU will soar from 139 million in 2011 to 155 million in 2020 or 12% of the increment (EC, 2014).

**Table 1.** Demand for accessible tourism in the European Union in year 2012

| Country of origin | Number of trips (in 000) | | | Share in total number of trips (in %) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | People with disabilities | Elderly population | Accessible trips (total) | |
| Austria | 4 347 | 7 629 | 11 976 | 1.5 |
| Belgium | 3 992 | 4 950 | 8 942 | 1.1 |
| Bulgaria | 65 | 1 266 | 1 331 | 0.2 |
| Croatia* | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Cyprus | 591 | 768 | 1 359 | 0.2 |
| Czechia | 12 551 | 16 695 | 29 246 | 3.7 |
| Denmark | 7 740 | 10 102 | 17 842 | 2.3 |
| Estonia | 757 | 1 092 | 1 849 | 0.2 |
| Finland | 12 148 | 10 256 | 22 404 | 2.9 |
| France | 73 368 | 87 760 | 161 128 | 20.6 |
| Germany | 36 026 | 85 402 | 121 428 | 15.5 |
| Greece | 5 598 | 9 296 | 14 894 | 1.9 |
| Ireland | 2 201 | 3 091 | 5 292 | 0.7 |
| Italy | 7 585 | 23 202 | 30 787 | 3.9 |
| Hungary | 2 636 | 5 271 | 7 907 | 1.0 |
| Latvia | 608 | 1 409 | 2 017 | 0.3 |
| Lithuania | 1 916 | 1 864 | 3 780 | 0.5 |
| Luxembourg | 253 | 368 | 621 | 0.1 |
| Malta | 70 | 325 | 395 | 0.1 |
| Netherlands | 24 649 | 14 891 | 39 540 | 5.1 |
| Poland | 10 268 | 19 942 | 30 210 | 3.9 |
| Portugal | 7 252 | 5 908 | 13 160 | 1.7 |
| Romania | 1 302 | 4 503 | 5 805 | 0.7 |
| Slovenia | 1 226 | 1 989 | 3 215 | 0.4 |
| Slovakia | 1 285 | 3 238 | 4 523 | 0.6 |
| Spain | 19 743 | 35 085 | 54 828 | 7.0 |
| Sweden | 13 465 | 18 797 | 32 262 | 4.1 |
| United Kingdom | 87 915 | 68 112 | 156 027 | 19.9 |
| **European Union** | **339 557** | **443 211** | **782 768** | 100.0 |

NA-Not available

*Croatia became a member of EU on 1st July 2013.

Source: EC (2014). *Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of AT in Europe – final Report.*

In 2009, there were more than 75 million people in Europe aged over 65. It is estimated that the total number of older people will increase to almost 35% of total population by the end of 2025 (UNWTO, 2016a).

The tourism market has recently recognized the great potential of less-mobile tourists with special needs i.e. *disabled tourists*. Although it is not a homogeneous group, as these tourists vary in their type of disability, which determines their specific needs on travel (ie. visually impaired people have different needs than those with physical disabilities), all these tourists have some similar travel characteristics. These characteristics relate to the preparation and realization of a tourist trip that are different from the standard ones, where tourists have no limitations. Preparation for the journey itself is a more demanding process because they need to be well-informed about travel possibilities and opportunities in a destination. However, PwD do not commonly travel alone (ENAT, 2007). Because of that, their total travel costs are generally higher and the PwD's trips depend on escort's choice of a destination and time (length of staying, time of the year). When choosing the type of accommodation, PwD are forced to choose those accommodations that have the appropriate equipment, facilities, and trained staff for their specific needs. These are usually high-quality hotels with higher prices (EC, 2014).

Still the demand for the AT is characterized by several positive characteristics: these tourists tend to travel more frequently during the low season, usually accompanied or in groups, make more return visits and spend more than average on their trips (UNWTO, 2016b). These travellers are loyal, frequent, travelling off-season and for longer periods (Aluas, 2016). Similarly, Luiza (2010) pointed out that the PwD usually travel in the company of a caregiver, family, or a friend, and very rarely alone, that increases their tourism expenditure in a tourist destination.

The tourist supply must be adjusted to their specific needs (destination availability, appropriate means of transportation, appropriate transportation to the accommodation, adequate room equipment and the possibility of using other facilities in the accommodation and destination environment, trained staff, etc.). Unfortunately, some destinations they want to visit may not have adequate offer to adapt to their specific needs. Finally, less than 30% of tourist suppliers in the EU offer some specific accessible service (UNWTO, 2016a). In Croatia, this situation is even worse.

**Research results – analysis of inclusion of croatian residents with disability in tourism**

The Republic of Croatia confirmed its commitment to the full realization of all basic human rights of the PwD by signing the UN CRPD in 2007. In order to achieve civil, social and cultural rights of the PwD, the Government of the Croatia has adopted three national strategies for PwD (2003-2006, 2007-2015 and 2017-2020) (National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for PwD, 2017). These documents, other activities of the public sector, and various non-profit organizations or civil society organizations in this area have improved PwD's quality of life in Croatia, but not enough, especially in some areas. The most neglected field is the opportunity of the RwD to participate in travel and tourism.

In the last decade, two relevant documents for tourism in Croatia were adopted. In both was stressed out that development of the AT in Croatia is far behind other EU countries, especially for PwD and older people.

The main development plan for tourism - the 'Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020' (Croatian Government, 2013) mentions the need to encourage the development of tourism for the PwD and other socially discriminated categories of the population in Croatia (eg. poor, young, elderly, etc.), but the plan lacked specific measures to achieve these goals.

Another important document for development AT in Croatia is the 'Croatian national program for the development of social tourism' (Krešić, Miličević & Marković, 2014), which was adopted in 2014 to encourage the development of social tourism. The document emphasized that the development of tourism supply for social tourism in Croatia till now has been spontaneous and that this supply is extremely disorganized and fragmented. In addition, it was pointed out that the situation with the tourism supply for the PwD is even worse, as the development of that supply was completely neglected. Despite the precise national legislation (laws, regulations, building standards etc.) that prescribe an obligation of safe and affordable construction of buildings and their spatial environment so that they can be easily accessible with no barriers for people with reduced mobility or some other health issue. In Croatia, numerous physical and other barriers for people with reduced mobility or some other defect still exist. Due to existing numerous physical and other barriers for people with reduced mobility or other mentioned defect, many potential PwD tourists in Croatia still don't participate in AT in such a manner as the other European citizens.

In the Croatia, in February 2016 were 511,194 PwD, accounting for 11.9% of the total population, according to the Croatian Registry for the PwD (National Strategy for Equalization of Opportunities for PwD, 2017). The question is, to what extent these people are involved in tourism. To get an answer to this question in July 2017 was conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview among disabled residents (Vuković, 2018). The most interesting results are presented in this paper.

All ten interviewed persons were physically disabled people with motor ability impairment issues. Focusing only on this target group has a major deficiency in research, so future research should include residents with other kinds of disability (blind, deaf, mute, people with mental disabilities etc.). For example, Loi & Kong (2017) have pointed out that PwD of mobility have different needs than people with vision or hearing impairment. In 'physically disabled people', persons with traumatic injuries (spinal cord injury, loss or damage of limb etc.) and persons with congenital or acquired diseases (cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis etc.) are included as well (Achieve Australia, 2019). Degree of disability differs among these persons, and when the level is higher, the person is less mobile and more dependent on others for help with usual daily activities (usually wheelchair users). According to the degree of disability, many respondents in this research were strongly limited because they have a 100% disability rate (8 respondents). One respondent has 80% disability rate, and one 50% disability rate.

Out of 10 interviewed persons, 70% were male and 30% female. Most of the respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years (70%), followed by people aged between 31 and 40 years (20%), and only one respondent was 41 year or older (10%). The higher proportion of young respondents with disabilities in the survey indicates a good distribution of the sample, as this age group of the PwD usually travels more often than others. This was proven by Var, Yeşiltaş, Yaylı & Öztürk (2011) in their survey of physically disabled respondents in Turkey in the year 2014 where they found that the age group of young people between 26 and 35 years of age travels more often than all others.

The most of respondents in this research have completed secondary education or high school (80%), and 20% had an academic degree ie. university qualifications. The above result does not reflect the educational structure of this group of population in Croatia, as Benjak (2019) states that 63% of Croatian PwD have not completed primary education and that only 28% have completed secondary education, indicating a lower education level of these persons than other residents. A lower level of education is the main problem for the employment of PwD. Disabled people experience lower labour market participation rates than the non-disabled (Grammenos, 2018).

Kitching (2014) pointed out that disability rapidly reduces employment opportunities in OECD countries. Consequently, in this research, half of the respondents were not employed (50%). Although this is not high share, the above result is even better than the Croatian average of PwD persons where the number of unemployed PwD in the total population is very high and constantly amounts to over 80% (Pravobraniteljica za osobe s invaliditetom, 2016). Weaker inclusion of PwD in the labour market influences the average lower property condition of the PwD in Croatia, which determines their lower social status in society and lower quality of life. For this reason, most respondents in this research stated that the main reason for their low involvement in tourist movements was the lack of financial resources. Here are some of their statements (Vuković, 2018):

- 'Discriminate you in everything and at work. It seems that we do not want to work because we receive financial social support from the state. I would be very happy to find a job because then I could have the financial resources to travel and for other needs.'
- 'The PwD do not seem to exist in the country.'
- 'Support of society is insufficient; mostly social support comes from non-profit associations. I think that the Croatia does not understand the problems faced by the PwD.'
- 'My personal monthly social support is less than 180 euros. I'm 27 years old, how can I live with such amount and how can I afford anything? For me, tourist trip is an unfulfilled dream.'
- 'For me, the main difficulty in travelling relates to the organization of the trip as it is a much more complicated procedure and much more expensive because at least one person has to travel with me. And when a person travels alone, it is much cheaper, isn't it?'
- 'I could spend my vacation in one coastal resort in Croatia only because I have relatives there.'
- 'I travel only because I arrange an exchange with someone over Facebook. Otherwise, I could never travel.'

The low level of socioeconomic status of the PwD in Croatia has placed them in an unsatisfactory position compared to citizens with disability in developed countries of the EU. When they were asked in an interview whether they would like to participate in tourist trips, all ten respondents expressed a enthusiasm to participate, but only a few of them were on the tourism trip. The lack of financial resources was highlighted as one of the main obstacles to their inclusion in tourist trips.

It should be taken into the account that the PwD's high-income elasticity of demand is influenced by their specific needs to perform routine activities, which in turn leads to their higher costs of living. With the high cost of living, it is necessary to mention insufficient government support and the difficulty of finding a job. That is why there is little, or nothing left for travelling and tourism for these persons.

The main factors affecting the financial constraints for travelling of the PwD in Croatia are: higher cost of travel due to the adaptation to their specific needs (an escort, a specific accommodation, comfortable transportation, accesses to beaches etc.), less favourable socio-economic position in society because of low employment rate and low financial social support, and more expensive costs of living for the PwD compared to people with no disabilities.

In addition to financial obstacles, other very important barriers to travel for Croatian RwD are physical obstacles. The main physical obstacles identified in our interview were: unconformity of transport for persons with moving restrictions (when they are travelling to or from destination and in their movement within the destination), difficult accessibility to various facilities in tourism destination, inadequate or no adaptation of the interior of tourist accommodation or other facilities for PwD, as well as other facilities which are not convenient and not accessible in the tourist destination (e.g. equipment and accessibility of beaches for PwD, accessibility of museums etc.), lack of information on the web site with accessibility options in tourism destinations or in accommodations etc. Here are some of respondents' statements:

- 'I wanted to enter the museum, but I couldn't because the access slope for the disabled was not provided.'
- 'Nothing is adapted for the PwD in the tourist resort where I spend the vacation. A friend helps me to enter the seawater because, without her help, I could neither get to the beach, nor swim in the sea.'
- 'In my hotel, I had special room equipped for the PwD, but the elevator was too narrow, and I could not use it.'
- 'It is not enough to arrange a room accessible for the PwD if you must use stairs to reach that room in tourism accommodation, which I have experienced.'
- 'In some restaurants in tourist destinations there was not a special toilet for the PwD.'
- 'Trains in Croatia are not adapted for the PwD at all.'
- 'When I was travelling by plane, my wheelchair was so damaged that it wasn't possible to repair it, and it was difficult for me without them in my tourist destination.'

Most of the Croatian transport system remains largely inaccessible to disabled. The similar problem was detected in Turkey (Var, Yeşiltaş, Yaylı & Öztürk, 2011). Physical obstacles represent a significant problem for the movement of the PwD in tourist destinations (transportation, accommodation, and other services, all of which are not accessible to persons with reduced mobility). The adaptability of architectural structures in Croatia is far from the standard required for the PwD, and the situation is even worse in transportation.

Hence, Croatian tourism is not yet accessible to PwD because of the unconformity of the tourist supply to these persons. This country needs to adapt the tourist amenities due to the fact that Croatia is one of the leading receptive tourism destinations at the European tourism market due to its attractiveness of natural and cultural-historical tourism resources, favourable geo-traffic position in South-Eastern European part of Mediterranean etc. On the other hand, small number of tourist and other facilities in tourism destinations are adapted for the PwD. Although in some tourist destinations where there is adequate accommodation for these persons, it is not possible to come to the beach or enter the pool in the hotel. Most of other services and facilities are inaccessible, such as wellness, sports, boat trips etc. (Klančir, 2015). Despite the generally very poor state of tourism supra-structure for the PwD in all country, in few last years some modest improvements are visible, but that is definitely not enough. For example, the number of beaches for the PwD has increased, from 11 in 2015 (Klančir, 2015) to 38 beaches in 2017 (TuristPlus, 2017). But there is still an actual problem how can one PwD get to that beach, not to mention all other problems.

Besides the local PwD, the second interview was conducted by the owner of the only travel agency in Croatia specializing in organized travel for PwD (Vuković, 2018). A result of this interview was important because this agency is specialised for organised trips not only to local inhabitants with disabilities but also for foreign tourist with disabilities on their organised trips to Croatia. The most interesting statements are:

- 'We had inquiries to organise tourist trips for foreign PwD, but most of them gave up after realizing that most of the tourism offer in Croatian tourist destinations were inaccessible. The reasons for the cancellation were: lack of accessible swimming pools at the hotel, inaccessibility of other services and facilities at the hotel for PwD, inadequate ability to move within the destination, etc.'

- 'The problem is also that some hoteliers, especially in the health resorts with springs thermal mineral water do not want to host foreign PwD because they come only occasionally. In this type of accommodation, most of the rooms are occupied by permanent domestic guests with disabilities whose accommodation costs are paid by the Croatian Institute of Public Health.'
- 'In other EU countries, unlike Croatia, there are more specialized agencies for the PWD.'

The results of the primary research indicate that tourist offer in Croatia is completely inadequate for the PwD. This problem should be stressed out, due to the fact that the number of people with the movement, vision, hearing or any other disability is increasing in total population.

**Conclusion**

Physical and financial barriers have been identified as the main obstacles to the inclusion of local PwD in tourist trips in Croatia. Physical obstacles are that the constructions of buildings are not suitable for the PwD (adaptation of the facilities and associated equipment in them), as well as the lack of public transport adapted for persons with reduced mobility. Financial barriers are result from the poor social and economic status of the PwD in Croatia. The study identified insufficient involvement of Croatia's potential in development of AT, especially for the PwD and older tourists with reduced mobility. The basic precondition to encourage development of accessible tourism in Croatia is to minimize or remove the influence of these basic barriers for the PwD, and also for elderly tourists, as these two segments are leading tourism segments for AT at emissive European tourist market.

In addition, to remove or minimize the influence of these basic obstacles, the basic precondition is to encourage the development of AT in Croatia. It is important to establish coordinated activities of all public, private and civil society actors to involve PwD in the development strategies and measures to promote accessible tourism in Croatia. Provision of good conditions for developing AT for domestic tourists with a disability will provide the basis on which it can be developed on demanding competitive international tourist market of this type of tourism. All the recent researches in the world, and especially in the EU, show a growing trend of AT with numerous benefits for all those destinations that have offer tailored to these tourists. This is extremely important for Croatia, where foreign tourists are constantly dominating in the total number of overnight stays, with a 92% share. From the total number of 90 million overnights in Croatia in 2018 foreign tourists realize 83 million overnights (CBS, 2018). If tourist supply in Croatia is not developed for local inhabitants with reduced mobility and other health limitations, it cannot attract either foreign tourism segment for AT. Thus, the fact that this tourism segment is going to increase much more dynamic than any other tourism segments in the future is enough encouraging for its development.

Croatia's development as a competitive tourism market for AT will require coordination of all participants, both public and private sector, and at all levels. All actors in the Croatian tourism industry that are rallied together around a clear common vision must work together and coordinate their activities in order to eliminate all obstacles that stand between them and the achievement of their goals to stimulate accessible tourism.

Consequently, in the years ahead, all stakeholders involved in the development of AT in Croatia, from the national, through the destination, to the local (enterprise) level, should make greater efforts to create tourism products and services accessible to all, without any exception.

*Limitations of this research*

Limitations of this research are related to the sample of research. Although the demanding research method has been conducted, few interviewed persons cause insufficient representativeness of the sample according to all socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational level, degree of disability) and focus on a narrow range of investigated area. A modest number of respondents is a major drawback of this research. Besides PwD with physical disability, other research should cover persons with other types of disabilities (e.g. blind, or deaf, or mute people etc.) because they have specific needs on tourism trips.

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# CAN VOLUNTOURISM BECOME A CHANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS OF CROATIA?

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***ABSTRACT***

*Volunteers expect an experience that is beneficial to them and the community they are visiting, which is why volunteering is considered transformative as it involves educated tourists. A high-quality volunteering model contributes to the development of volunteering and tourism in the tourist destination, the well-being and improvement of the quality of life of the local population, and the competitiveness of the tourist offer of the destination. The methodological framework of this paper required extensive and detailed research since the concept of volunteerism is still underdeveloped in Croatia. Theoretical framework is based of available secondary data sources. Primary dana was collected through extensive qualitative research, the implementation of in-depth interviews with members of NGO-s active in tourism, tourism specialists and academics.*

*Results of the research showed that numerous obstacles for developing of voluntarist camps in Croatia still exist, and they are: lack of accommodation availabilities and capacities, lack of regulations, administration obstacles in sector of traveling organization, lack of subvention for this type of tourism and lack of cooperation between potential shareholders of this alternative form of tourist supply*

*Due to the unequal interest in the development of this form of tourism in Croatia, it would be marginal for the time being and could not have a substantial positive impact on regional development. Respondents believe, that for the successful development of a volunteer camp in Croatia, old and abandoned buildings should be revitalized for the purpose of being converted into volunteer camps in order to create a national network which could have a wider impact on economic development of regions. Benefits of setting up volunteer camps would be to foster creativity, innovation and imagination of trainees and fostering ecocentric awareness, a culture of collaboration, understanding, togetherness, tolerance, and communication among people.*

***Keywords:*** *sustainable development; voluntourism; altruism; region; development*

## Introduction

Voluntourism, as a new type of tourism that attracts attention of scientific community in this sector to explore it more deeply (Benson, 2015; Foller-Carroll and Charlebois, 2016; Rattan, 2015; Sujarittanonta, 2014; Wilson, 2015 ). Voluntourism is an innovative form of tourism that can have positive influence on a destination and contribute to its sustainable development (Paraskevaidis i Andriotis, 2016). Considering a rising number of people searching for meaningful and useful travel, voluntourism is an ideal answer to this new trend (Gray and Campbell, 2007 according Rattan, 2015). Nowadays, tourists in their travel seek for opportunity for personal growth, adoption of new skills and knowledge that will help them to become better persons. Voluntourism encourage tourists who want to be active, involved and connected with local people, and who understand cultural differences. Voluntourism can be defined as integral combination of volunteer work in touristic destination with traditional elements of travel - art, culture, geography, history, recreation in destination.

There is a rising number of evidences of such interaction of destination, community, and tourist in very different destinations. Lough et all (2011 according Kontogeorgopoulos, 2014) evidenced that short term volunteering in Peru contributed to a local community with new ideas, better intercultural competence of local community and exchange of technical and other skills. Zahra (2006) explored experience of volunteer tourist from Australia and New Zeland that volunteered in Philippines, India, Togo and Fiji. She discovered that volunteers experienced spiritual transformation after their voluntary work.

Furthermore, Barbieri, Santos and Katsube (2011) explored experiences of volunteer tourism in Ruanda. This research shows that there is a need for improvement for volunteer managing. Authors suggest creating more detailed plan of volunteer working program with a list of tasks, obligations, and related roles. Authors also claimed that there is a need for overcoming language barriers and cultural differences between local people and volunteers.

Furthermore, Dominiques and Nojd (2012) explored how volunteers get benefits from volunteer tourism in Brazil. This research shows that volunteers are more motivated by self-interest than by altruism. Accordingly, Callanan and Thomas (2005 according Rattan, 2015) claimed that there is an increase in global awareness about ecological and social problems all over the world and encouraged volunteer organizations to associate with tourist agencies.) Authors Galley and Clifton (2004 according Rattan, 2015) believe that popularity of voluntourism in America, China, Africa, India and Indonesia is a result of its ability to ensure resources for social and ecological projects that normally have a limited financial support from a government and usually don’t benefit from tourism.

In Croatia there is a gap in practical evidences, but also in scientific literature cover partially by Dukić, Ateljević and Tomljenović (2017) explored a specific type of volunteer ecotourism- WWOOFing (Working weekends on organic farms) as a type of transformative tourism in Croatia. This research showed that motivation of farmers for this type of tourism is getting an extra help on a farm, then meeting people from different countries and spreading knowledge about organic agriculture and sustainable lifestyle. On the other hand, volunteers are motivated by their desire for learning, taking part in organic agriculture, pursuit for new experiences, escape from daily routine and possibility for cheap stay in a destination. It can be concluded that WWOOFing is a type of transformative tourism that can enable intensive cultural exchange ensuring benefit to volunteers, farmers, and local production. The research of several authors (Devile i

Wearing, 2013; Miller i Mair, 2015; McIntosh i Bonnemann, 2016 according to Dukić, Ateljević and Tomljenović, 2017) showed that volunteer eco-tourism i.e. working weekends on organic farms (WWOOF) transforms individuals on a personal and a social level. The result for volunteers is a bigger consumption of organic food, open mind, optimism, tolerance, reducing cultural stereotype and prejudices.

The aim of this paper is to show investigate how can designed voluntourism program, synergy of different shareholders and establishment of voluntourism camps in selected areas in Croatia contribute to underdeveloped areas. Croatia has opportunity for developing voluntourism that can transform individuals and a community in a whole. By connecting volunteering with tourism it is possible to contribute to solving of social and ecological problems that cannot be solved in other ways.

**Transforming volunteering into a tourism product**

By connecting volunteer tourism product with special interest tourism, a platform for creating volunteer tourism products and a project is created, which through its interpretation and presentation will mirror the collective memory of the destination, achieve a sense of pride, self-esteem and self-awareness of all, and raise the level of collective self-understanding and achieve a shift and innovations that will be stimulating in their environment (Miljković i Jurčec (2015), but also at the broader national and European level.

A creative volunteer tourism arrangement enables an individual to acquire new knowledge, skills and competences that make him or her different from others, thus giving him the opportunity to develop as a person, to develop his personality (Juzbašić i Vukasović Hlupić, 2015). Creative tourism is about self-discovery, but at the same time it is also about discovering and understanding the world. It is creative tourism, that is, creative interpretation of heritage in the experiential sequence that prolongs the memory of the destination, making it more intense and easier, more compelling, and understanding of the local community easier.

The volunteer tourism experience (Wearing, 2002) consists of three components: ecotourism, international volunteering and "serious leisure". Volunteer tourists expect an experience that is beneficial not only to them (contributes to their personal and spiritual development) but also to the receptive region - the local population and its environment. In the light of the above, we can rightly say that volunteerism is, in fact, transformative tourism and a reversal of the world paradigm towards informed consumers (Elshaug i Metzer , 2001; Rusac i Dujmović, 2014).

In the process of creating a model for the development of a volunteer tourism product, systematic thinking is the basis, since the model should be theoretically grounded, practically feasible, clear and stimulating, and therefore use TEM (total experience management). Considering the whole, this provides the best path to the satisfaction of all participants in the process of developing a volunteer tourism product, based on four key factors(Foller-Carroll i Charlebois, 2016):

- satisfaction of volunteer tourists,
- satisfaction of all participants in the local volunteer tourist offer,
- satisfaction of the local population,
- preserving the quality of the environment.
- To properly select the development scenario, i.e. to include volunteer activity in a specific tourism product / special form of tourism, the following should be considered:
- contribution to the development of volunteering and the development of tourism in a tourist destination,

- contribution to the well-being of the local population and the growth of their overall quality of life,
- contributing to the competitiveness of the destination's tourism offer.

This kind of transformation in the context of sustainability signifies a change in the attitudes, perceptions, characteristics, and particular fundamental personal dimensions of both the host and the volunteer tourists. All these forms of transformation are individual and cannot be generalized and standardized because each transformation is a process in a time and space that is special and unique, and ultimately results in the consumer becoming a product. This personalization of experiences means added value compared to standard mass tourism products and services

When choosing the contents of a volunteer arrangement, it should be borne in mind that most volunteer tourists, even those of older age, love outdoor activities, which usually means staying in volunteer camps through various activities such as camping, boating, fishing, hiking, etc. Life in volunteerism The camp is a combination of work and various social activities that take place outside the work environment, such as visiting attractions, museums, going to concerts and theatres, visiting local government, schools, etc. About 2000 volunteer camps are opened each year, mostly in Latin countries. America. Although the stay lasts from two to four weeks, some projects also require significantly longer stays. At the heart of the idea of volunteering is, first and foremost, an interactive and intercultural experience that is realized through contact between tourists and the local receptive community. Although this relationship is two-way, in discussions about volunteerism far more attention is paid to tourists and their needs, motives and experiences than to members of local communities. Part of tourists actively and directly participate in the daily life of the local community, although of a temporary and limited duration, their experience can be phenomenologically defined as experimental (Cohen, 1979). According to the authors Callanan and Thomas (2005), there is a significant difference in the intensity of the volunteer tourist experience and it cannot be the same when a teenager without special skills and qualifications spends 14 days observing the work of others or when a 30 year qualified bricklayer participates in a six-month training project for local community members to themselves erect the necessary facilities and perform space adaptations. The mentioned authors point out that it is necessary to distinguish the following factors in the development of a tourism product / experience:

- length of visit (volunteer engagement)
- level of involvement in the volunteer project (from passive to active)
- skills and qualifications of volunteer tourists as participants in relation to a project
- The degree of focus of the volunteer project on participants' self-realization and contribution to the local community.

Since volunteering is a special form of tourism, it belongs to the so-called alternative forms of tourism and sustainable tourism, and taking into account Cohen's (1979) phenomenology of tourism experience, we can conclude that the voluntary tourism experience is experimental (characteristic of individuals who do not conform to imposed social norms and seek the lifestyle alternatives offered by ecological and ethnological communities) and existential experience (adopting a completely new model of values and rules; the volunteer tourist wants to dive into the authentic life and culture of the local host community, a modality that is phenomenologically appropriate to the pilgrimage).

The vast majority of these volunteer tourists emphasize that they want to “enter” the local community, they want to participate in activities that include intercultural exchange.

They want exclusivity and special access to a "back space" that is not accessible to other "mass" and "ordinary" tourists. Learning and discovering is as important to them as sharing experiences with other members of the group.

In the development of this particular, alternative form of tourism / tourism product besides mass, problems can arise when the wishes of the volunteer (in terms of the type of project and place of execution, ie destination) are given priority over the needs and wishes of the local community, which is realistically possible with projects offered by individual travel agencies and companies whose sole interest is profit. That is why we are here to warn that private agencies and companies can influence the undermining or diminishing benefits of volunteering, through its increasing commodification.

**Methodology**

A growing number of papers addresses the topic of volunteering as a link between altruism and tourism (sources), with the focus on the benefits for volunteering users themselves in focus, tourists, and locals (sources). However, relatively few studies consider volunteering as a chance to develop passive ends. To this end, this paper analyzes the basic data on tourism activity at the level of cities and municipalities, and identifies the main areas that, in terms of passive areas, would have the potential to develop this type of tourism. Also, main development need of these municipalities/towns have been analyzed, searching for needs which can be achieved through voluntourism.

The development index, a composite indicator calculated as the adjusted average of standardized values of socio-economic indicators, was used as a measure of development of individual areas in order to measure the level of development of LC (R)SGUs in a given period.

The development index enables measuring the level of development of LC (R)SGU in the Republic of Croatia. By directly linking the level of regional development incentives with the level of development, a quality framework for encouraging the development of all local and county units is obtained in accordance with the level of development of individual units. Also, this approach enables the inclusion and exclusion of units from the system of supported areas in accordance with changes in the level of development.

In accordance with the Act on Regional Development of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 147/14 and 123/17;) the following indicators were used for the calculation of the development index:

average income per capita

average source income per capita

average unemployment rate

general movement of population

level of education of the population (tertiary education)

ageing index.

Indicators indicating the rate of tourism, the number of overnight stays per capita, as well as the number of tourist beds per capita were also analyzed.

Finally in-depth interviews with tourism professionals who have been involved in voluntourism have been conducted with the aim of determining their vision of voluntourism development and needs in Croatia, whit referring to development needs of certain regions. Interviews have been conducted during November and December of 2018 with scientists, public bodies and NGO-s involved in the research topic.

## Voluntourism as a development chance, case of Croatia

Volunteering in the Republic of Croatia has a long tradition that can be linked to the principle of solidarity, although it has been applied during previous periods in ways that are different from the current interpretation of volunteerism. Many political and social turmoil in the region, which brought with it a series of instability in the daily activities of the local population, influenced the high level of dependence on various forms of assistance, which was given/advocated through humanitarian and voluntary activities.

In 2007, the Act on volunteering was passed (Official Gazette 58/07) regulating volunteering. The Act provides the following definition of volunteering: "volunteering, for the purposes of this Act, shall be considered a voluntary investment of personal time, effort, knowledge and skills to perform services or activities for the well-being of another person or for the general well-being, carried out by persons in the manner stipulated by this Act, without the condition of payment of a financial reward or claim of other material gain for conducted volunteering, unless otherwise specified by this Act".

The Republic of Croatia does not have official, systematically collected data on the development of volunteering (including the number of volunteers, indicators on the economic value of volunteering, etc.). Nevertheless, Croatian civil society organizations and certain international donor institutions have made efforts to develop and implement research projects in the field of volunteering (frequency of volunteering, types of volunteering activities and public attitudes towards volunteering). Conducted research points to the fact that volunteerism remains primarily in the sphere of interest of civil society organizations.

## Underdeveloped regions in Croatia as a resource for voluntourism

Taking into account that volunteer tourism is a form of tourism focused on areas with relatively low rates of tourism development, but also which are at the same time areas of generally weaker economic development, municipalities and cities with the aforementioned characteristics were detected in this part of the paper. 50 least-developed local self-government units were selected, all belonging to the lowest group of development (1), and the indicators of tourism and GDP per capita were compared.

**Table 1.** Fifty least developed municipalities in Croatia

| Municipality/town | County | Development index group | Overnight stays per capita | Beds per capita | Average income per capita (euros) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dežanovac | Bjelovarsko-bilogorska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 16.474,05 |
| Babina Greda | Vukovarsko-srijemska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 12.956,53 |
| Glina | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,06 | 0,00 | 22.762,40 |
| Mikleuš | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 15.667,29 |
| Nova Bukovica | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 19.375,22 |
| Viljevo | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,01 | 0,00 | 15.575,21 |
| Drenje | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,02 | 0,00 | 14.618,00 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Drenovci | Vukovarsko-srijemska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 15.587,87 |
| Stara Gradiška | Brodsko-posavska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,01 | 20.264,70 |
| Čađavica | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 0,29 | 0,03 | 16.192,22 |
| Velika Pisanica | Bjelovarsko-bilogorska | 1 | 0,78 | 0,07 | 15.523,57 |
| Lećevica | Splitsko-dalmatinska | 1 | 7,25 | 0,17 | 27.279,59 |
| Gračac | Zadarska | 1 | 0,70 | 0,08 | 18.955,35 |
| Vojnić | Karlovačka | 1 | 0,35 | 0,06 | 13.100,21 |
| Podgorač | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,01 | 15.113,67 |
| Markušica | Vukovarsko-srijemska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 13.007,64 |
| Draž | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,62 | 0,03 | 19.325,66 |
| Gradina | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 14.548,70 |
| Cista Provo | Splitsko-dalmatinska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 15.868,22 |
| Popovac | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,05 | 0,01 | 20.195,35 |
| Sopje | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 5,26 | 0,02 | 15.147,46 |
| Zrinski Topolovac | Bjelovarsko-bilogorska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 10.161,91 |
| Voćin | Virovitičko-podravska | 1 | 0,40 | 0,00 | 12.580,34 |
| Lokvičići | Splitsko-dalmatinska | 1 | 1,63 | 0,03 | 16.614,96 |
| Šodolovci | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 16.540,02 |
| Saborsko | Karlovačka | 1 | 10,46 | 0,22 | 23.044,91 |
| Majur | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 21.678,74 |
| Gornji Bogićevci | Brodsko-posavska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 13.659,11 |
| Sunja | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,01 | 0,00 | 20.087,43 |
| Levanjska Varoš | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,15 | 0,01 | 11.696,79 |
| Vrbje | Brodsko-posavska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 14.291,83 |
| Jagodnjak | Osječko-baranjska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 14.140,62 |
| Cetingrad | Karlovačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 19.382,95 |
| Hrvatska Dubica | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,24 | 0,01 | 17.019,33 |
| Okučani | Brodsko-posavska | 1 | 0,13 | 0,02 | 15.196,91 |
| Gunja | Vukovarsko-srijemska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 12.733,00 |
| Žumberak | Zagrebačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 22.515,63 |
| Plaški | Karlovačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 14.642,03 |
| Kijevo | Šibensko-kninska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 28.778,79 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Krnjak | Karlovačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 13.493,39 |
| Đulovac | Bjelovarsko-bilogorska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 11.514,99 |
| Dvor | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,02 | 0,01 | 15.798,24 |
| Vrhovine | Ličko-senjska | 1 | 0,20 | 0,10 | 12.468,37 |
| Donji Lapac | Ličko-senjska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 17.204,87 |
| Kistanje | Šibensko-kninska | 1 | 0,10 | 0,01 | 8.947,59 |
| Donji Kukuruzari | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 13.110,16 |
| Gvozd | Sisačko-moslavačka | 1 | 0,01 | 0,01 | 15.364,54 |
| Biskupija | Šibensko-kninska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 16.363,81 |
| Ervenik | Šibensko-kninska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 14.498,85 |
| Civljane | Šibensko-kninska | 1 | 0,00 | 0,00 | 17.671,99 |

Source: Authors' research

All analyzed local self-government units have between 55% and 80% lower GDP per capita than the City of Zagreb (which has the highest GDP per capita in the Republic of Croatia - 44000 €). The general weak economic development is followed by the development of tourism, with 26 units not achieving any tourist turnover in 2018, while most other units have less than one bed-nights per capita. The exception is the Saborsko municipality, which has a somewhat more intense tourist traffic due to the vicinity of the Plitvice Lakes. We can conclude that these are exceptionally poor tourist developed areas, with only three municipalities having a tourist community (Babina Greda, Glina and Cista Provo).

It is important to add that these are areas that are very sparsely inhabited and that have a very rich resource base in the form of natural heritage (Fig.1.), especially Regional and Nature parks (Lonjsko polje, Mura-Drava, Kopački rit.etc and thus are suitable for the development of tourism. The largest number of detected municipalities is in the Osijek-Baranja County (8), Sisak-Moslavina County (7), Vukovar-Podarvina County (6) and Karlovac County (5).

**Interviews results and synthesis**

One of the main conclusions from conducted interviews is that cooperation between profit (tourist) and nonprofit organizations (volunteer organization) is essential for organizing voluntourist programs. Voluntourist programs are specific ones because they are developing due to community needs and their local habits. The programs are created for voluntourists (volunteer tourists) who want to explore new places and to give contribution to local people and their community. The aim of voluntourist program is to improve the quality of life of local people by giving contribution to local development in the specific area. Success of voluntourist program is determined by synergy action of following shareholders: a) *volunteer organization* which task is searching, informing, advising and educating volunteer tourists for their volunteer work in the local community; b) *tourist agencies* that organize accommodation and transport for volunteers; c) voluntourists who work in a local community and interact with local people. For successful development of voluntourism in Croatia it is essential cooperation between following institutions: Nonprofit organizations, Ministry of Social Care and Young People, destination management organizations, international organizations for volunteer work and Croatian Ferial Union.

As some of the possible project areas with the biggest possibilities to develop in terms of voluntourism in Croatia the one emphasized were: environment protection - volunteer work in forests and parks, organized by National parks, then cultural manifestations organized by tourist community, city administration or municipality; sport events organized by nonprofit sector; cultural heritage protection; care of animals in asylum; agriculture volunteer work, organized by nonprofit sector such as schools and public institutions.

Respondents also emphasized that voluntourism can contribute to development of a destination by creating new projects that are useful for local people and by participation of international volunteers. There are several suggestions for development of voluntourism in Croatia: identification of old and abandoned objects in public property; then creation of investment cost effectiveness study; selection of the best projects that meet criteria (cost effectiveness, capability for improvement of living standard of local community, possibility for employing disabled people etc.); solving problems with administrative barriers (for example property rights); adaptation of objects for tourist purpose; public information about performed activities in the projects.

This interviews also showed to the practical barriers to voluntourism development in Croatia. These are for example: lack of accommodation for volunteers, lack of legislation for this area of tourism, administrative barriers for travel organizing, lack of subventions for this type of tourism and insufficient cooperation between shareholders in the projects.

Example of good practice pointed out during the interviews was the concept of is WWOOFing i.e. working weekends on organic farms. In Croatia there is around 36 farmers involved in WWOOF, but national organization still does not exist. Organic farms are located in rural areas close to big cities and farmers are people middle age that have own property. Average time of volunteer stay on farm is two weeks-two months, type of accommodation are tents, camp, farmers house, and type of work is volunteering on farm or with animals and household help. On Adriatic coast and on islands volunteers can work in gardens, vineyards, olives yards and cultivate herbs. In continental Croatia volunteers can cultivate fruit and vegetables, work with animals and preserve wood, produce domestic food (cheese, milk, wine, alcohol ), reconstruct buildings, construct furniture, participate in manifestation organisation. A motivation for farmers to searching volunteers is need for additional workforce and meeting new people with different experiences. WOOFing is a good way for volunteers to see how agriculture functionate in other countries and to broaden their horizons. In Croatia a good candidate for promotion of WWOOFing would be association ZMAG (green network of activist groups) because it gathers organic gardeners, ecological constructors and ecological activists. This association tendency is sustainable development of ecosystem, environment protection, organic agriculture.

The final conclusion of all these experts interviews are that volontourism in Croatia can be developed by cooperation with ecological ,animal protection, cultural and heritage associations. Also, young people should be properly educated to become responsible community members that live and promote sustainable lifestyle. The development of volontourism in underdeveloped areas of Croatia can be encouraged by renovating old buildings in public property and adapt them for voluntourist purposes to establish voluntourist camps where voluntourist could be accommodated. Also, it is important to promote this type of tourism among young people and different institutions, associations and experts that can give their contribution from their expertise. The voluntourist camp designed programme is an attempt to solving different social problems in innovative and creative way by synergy and cooperation of different shareholders. Also, it is a great opportunity to provide new touristic product that will meet new trends and unify various group of interests and at the same time reduce social and ecological problems with respecting society needs.

**Conclusion**

Voluntourism as a form of transformative tourism leads to a completely new pattern in the economy, where it is necessary to redesign the flow of money and capital so that it starts to act with the awareness of externalities. This is what we call a co-creative eco-centric economy; it includes continuous reinvestment of money from the financial sector into non-financial forms of capital creation, i.e. in natural, human, social and cultural-creative capital (especially sought in tourism. For Croatia, especially its underdeveloped parts , this means the possibility to move beyond the theory of economic growth only, opening the way for alternative perspectives on how individuals or groups work to improve themselves as active factors by inserting a spiritual dimension that enables them to grow and develop personally. Through the paradigm of revitalization, and through alternative forms of transformative tourism, where we also include voluntarism, only those tourist activities that are tailored and tasted by the domestic community can contain in them the creative and inspiring impulse which will then be recognized by travellers who will feel welcome in such an environment as its integral part.

Considering all relevant issues it is suggested to designing projects and defining topics of a voluntourist camp in Croatia in underdeveloped areas such as Lika, Posavina or Slavonska Podravina for folowing voluntourist works: environment protection, help in organizing cultural manifestations, cultural heritage protection and animal care. Voluntourist programs would be created by cooperation with different organizations and institutions, for example by connecting with ecological, cultural, and animal protection associations. As a part of voluntourist programs, voluntourists can also participate in creative courses and educational trainings where they would teach local people about environment protection, energy efficiency, sustainable development, organic agriculture, waste management and how to use products for longer period or how to save energy.

Benefits of establishing voluntourist camp in Croatia would be encouraging voluntourists for creativity, innovation, and imagination, as well as for developing ecological awareness, critical thinking and responsibility through environment, understanding the problem of modern society and adopting sustainable lifestyle in harmony with nature. Voluntourist program would educate voluntourist about team cooperation, understanding, tolerance, community life and a new eco-centric paradigm. The final result of the voluntourist camp program would be generating new ideas for implementation of knowledge in real life, knowledge transfer, further environment protection and reducing waste, as well as energy efficiency in private and business life.

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# IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN TOURIST DESTINATION CHOICE – HE CASE OF CROATIA

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***ABSTRACT***

*Background and goals: For years, the traditional media (TV, radio, and print publications) have been the only tool for marketing communication about destination brand, and the main source of information for tourists. During the last decades media space underwent a strong transformation in favor of social over traditional media. Today's consumers consistently require more control over their media consumption, so they turn from traditional media to social media as a source of marketing communication and spend greater proportion of their time on social media compared to traditional media. Similar situation is also in tourism. Accordingly, the main goal of this paper is to examine the importance of social and traditional media in tourist destination choice setting.*

*Design/methodology/approach: An internet survey was used to examine the tourists' attitude on the intensity of use of social media in relation to the use of traditional media during the destination choice. The sample was made by more than 1.050 tourists who are also users of social media. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.*

*Results: Research findings show that traditional media are still more important than social media in tourist destination choice. Within traditional media, the most influential are TV, and newspapers and magazines, followed by billboards and radio. Among social media, the strongest influence has YouTube, Booking.com, Facebook and at the end TripAdvisor.*

*Conclusions: Surprisingly, the importance of social media (Facebook, YouTube, TripAdvisor and Booking.com) did not overpower the importance of traditional media (TV, newspapers and magazines, billboards, and radio) when tourists choose a tourist destination, although the proposed hypothesis was the opposite.*

*Implications: Although social media in the tourism industry has attracted great attention in recent years, marketing managers in the destination should not neglect marketing communication through traditional media because they are even more important when tourists choose tourist destinations.*

***Keywords**: destination choice; marketing communication; social media; traditional media; tourism*

## Introduction

Scientists from different social disciplines are focused on the question of how consumers make decisions and choose products or services. Most of those researches are conducted in the field of marketing, in which a considerable part of the literature on decision making appears from the 1950s (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005: 815). Since then, the analysis of decision making is one of the most researched marketing areas (Zwerin, 1970). Therefore, when it comes to choice, it is complex (Altman, 2003), theoretical incompletely developed (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005) and often unconscious process (Altman, 2003) which can be accessed from different perspectives due to minor decisions involved in the process of final choice (Fesenmaier & Yang, 2000). Scientists involved in it are faced with the difficult task of measuring and understanding the process that is imperceptible and which consumers are only partially aware. But on the other hand, "that the choice is so easy to understand (or do), there would be no need for this extensive research effort" (Carroll & Johnson, 1990, p. 19), not only in tourism but also in other social disciplines.

The choice of a tourist destination has always been a key issue in the tourism management literature (Papatheodorou, 2001, p. 164), as one of the most important segments of the research regarding consumer behavior in tourism (Djeri, Plavša & Cerovic, 2007, p. 70). This comes out from the fact that the trips are significant events in the lives of consumers which enables them to escape from everyday life. Escape from everyday life requires a major commitment: for many it represents a rare but highly valuable purchase with a high level of uncertainty emerged from the intangible nature and social implications. Therefore, decisions on tourist destination choice are presented as a long planning process that includes long-term problem solving (Djeri, Plavša & Cerovic, 2007, p. 70). Destination choice itself can be defined as the process of choosingdestination between competing alternatives (Crompton, 1992; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Each of this choice is under the influence of massive number of factors, or combinations of the same (Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989). Previous literature has proposed numerous factors in an effort to explain the destination choice (Nicolau & Mas, 2008, p. 1026); non-psychological (external) variables (Hus, Tsai & Wu, 2009, p. 289) such as traditional and social media that are the area of research in this paper, and psychological (internal) characteristics of an individual (Nicolau & Mas, 2008, p. 1026; Hus, Tsai & Wu, 2009, p. 289). Under the external variables, it is possible to highlight the economic and non-economic factors (Djeri, Plavša & Cerovic, 2007, p. 76), the range of information sources such as friends and family, travel documentaries, previous experience with the destination (Crompton, 1992; Decrop & Snelders, 2005; Seddighe & Theocharous, 2002; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989) and the attributes of the destination (Nicolau & Mas, 2008, p. 1026). Because potential tourists generally have limited knowledge about the attributes of destination that have never visited before, dimensions of the image and attitudes about tourist destination (Lancaster, 1996) presented through traditional and social media will probably be one of the key elements in the process of destination choice.

Traditional media are media that have preceded to the appearance of the Internet, and along with them to social media. They represent traditional instruments of marketing communication by which non-selective promotional message is transmitted to thepublic (Jadhav, Kamble & Patil, 2012, p. 45). They can be separated into three groups: print (eg. newspapers, magazines, posters), television, and radio (Keller, 2009; O 'Guinn, Allen & Semenic, 2009). For a long time, the traditional media were the only marketing tool used to communicate about tourist destination brand, and a major source of information (Luo & Zhong, 2015, p. 275; Sjöberg, 2010) for tourists. Over the past decade media landscape has experienced strong transformation in favor of social over traditional media.

Historically, the traditional media has dictated what the public needs to hear or see (Jonas, 2010, p. 123), and the promotion of goods and services is focused on the delivery of non-selective messages (Drury, 2008, p. 275) for the general public. With the user generated content and social media that wall began to crumble (Jonas, 2010, p. 123), and destination marketing managers are faced with the challenge that they are no longer the only source of information about the destination. The rise of social media implies a shift from simple passive content consumption, to a more active selection, interaction, and content creation. Tourists use social media in order to explore, investigate, plan, book, and ultimately to share their experiences of travel (Oliveira & Panyik, 2015, p. 54) with a goal of enhancement that same experience (Cuel & Brosegni, 2011, p, 3). That is how they collected information about the destination they are visiting, seek opinions and reviews of hotels, attractions and other activities associated with travel (Cuel & Brosegni, 2011, p. 3; Nusayris et al., 2012) in order to be at least partially informed about their final decision (Cox et al., 2008; Gretz, Yoo & Purifoy, 2007). In tourism information are extremely important (Buhalis, 2003; Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007), so social media can play a key role as an independent source of information (Zheng & Gretz, 2010), and form of word of mouth communication (Tham, Croy & Mair, 20132, p. 144). In fact, travel information on social media have become common place in everyday life of social media users (Luo & Zhong, 2015).

However, the full impact of social media is still estimated (Zheng & Gretz, 2010) because the studies of social media in tourism are only at their beginning (Luo & Zhong, 2015, p. 275). A research on the relationship between social and traditional media in the context of tourist destination choice almost does not exist, especially not in Croatia. Many factors suggest that the study of this relationship is worthwhile, as for theoretical purposes, as well as for implementation of managerial and marketing activities, such as marketing communications, sales and product positioning of a tourist destination. It is important to know how and when consumers plan and choose the various elements of their next trip (Decrop & Snelders, 2004, p. 1009) because that provides strategic intelligence for destination management organizations and marketing managers of tourist destinations (Oppermann, 1997).

Therefore, the aim of this paper is through a focus on four social media platforms that are important in tourism (Facebook, YouTube, TripAdvisor and Booking.com), explore their importance compared to traditional media (TV, newspapers and magazines, billboards, and radio) in tourist destination choice; as well as to examine the importance of individual social media platforms and forms of traditional media with each other in the observed context. This paper contributes to the existing literature on consumer behavior, and tourism in several ways. First, it provides the first insight into the relationship between traditional and social media and tourist destination choice setting in Croatia. Second, internal and external variables have a significant influence on tourist destination choice; therefore, understanding of those variables by destination marketing managers can significantly contribute to strengthening their competitive advantage, and more successful management of marketing communication mix of their tourist destinations.

## Literature review

*Tourist destination choice*

Pointing out the complexity of the process of tourist destination choice (Hsu, Tsai & Wu, 2009, p. 288), researches on tourists' choice are viewed from multiple perspectives, regarding the multiple minor decisions involved in the final choice (Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000). If the focus is on the basic choice of tourists, i.e. "go on a trip", in the literature can be found that the likelihood of choices is usually treated as one decision (Hay & Mcconnell, 1979) with two possible outcomes - stay or go (Fotheringham, 1986, p. 401). Therefore, the decision to leave the place of residence and to travel is the first choice made by tourist (Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002), while the other choice is concerned with the choice of a particular tourist destination and it is much more complex because there are usually more than two outcomes (Fotheringham, 1986, p. 401). If the focus is on choosing a tourist destination, the authors also look at destination choice among multiple alternatives that are defined in terms of administrative units, for example countries (Morley, 1994), macro (Siderelis & Moore, 1998) and types of destinations such as regional or national parks (Schroeder & Louviere, 1999).

The final choice of a destination is not an independent decision, but it is the last decision of the set of choices that determine it (Eugenio-Martin, 2003). In that set, there are numerous smaller decisions that appear continuously much earlier than the moment of actual purchase (Djeri, Plavša & Čerović, 2007, p. 71). Some of the choices that are placed in front of tourists range from "where to go", over "what will I do now when I am here", and so on. A lot of decisions are based on contextual facts, while others are based on the perception or evaluation of decisions with high risk, considering that no one knows how "good" his or her trip would be, until it take it (Smallman & Moore, 2010, p. 399). Tourists hesitate when it comes to final decision because tourist destination choice is perceived as a high-risk decision due to potentially unknown elements of the destination, as well as lack of experience (Woodside & Lysonski, 1989).

Tourist destination choice is a cognitive process, but at the same time there are present emotional and hedonistic needs which may also require fulfillment (Crompton, 1992; Decrop & Snelders, 2005). The cognitive and affective processes involve elimination of destinations during the final decision, and choice of the destination that suits the best to the consumer needs (Crompton, 1992; Seddighi & Theocharous, 2002). Apart from cognitive process, the process of tourist destination choice has been conceptualized in the literature from three other perspectives. It is perceived as a reasonable action determined by the attitude and impact of social groups (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), as an economic activity in which alternative that maximizes utility is chosen (Harris, Driver & Bergersen, 1985), and as the casuall participation which is built into perceived competencies and results in the search for destination attributes that are considered to offer optimal satisfaction (Iso-Aloha, 1980).

Beside the fact that noticeable part of tourism research is trying to understand why tourists visit certain destinations and why they choose a particular destination (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005), researches, like this one, address factors that have influence in that process (Hanlan, Fuller & Wilde, 2006, p. 18). Among other things, the intensity of the influence and the current external factors will vary depend on the level of tourists' needs and habits. For example, if a tourist has a developed tourism culture, he / she exactly knows what product or service wants, and the influence of external sources on his / her decision is minimal compared to tourists with less developed tourism culture (Djeri, Plavša & Čerović, 2007, p. 76). Van Middelkoop, Borgers and Timmermans (2003, p. 75) assume that tourists do not necessarily maximize their benefit when choosing a destination, but that the behavior during the choice depends on the context. Given the special conditions associated with their family, environment and other aspects of their tourism experience, it is assumed that different heuristics are used. This would mean that individuals do not necessarily evaluate all the possible alternatives in a large set of criteria to find the best choice, but rather use simpler rules of selection. Those rules express the connection between the conditions that govern within the environment, and on their personal situation and the choices they make.

*The ratio between traditional and social media*

As increasing number of scientists states that social media have become the most powerful mass medium of our time, and that they are gradually replacing the traditional media (Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schafer, 2012, p. 770), it is not surprising that there is an increased interest in the study of social media over traditional media, as well as their impact on marketing outcomes (Libai et al., 2010). But despite the increased interest of scientists for social media, traditional media continue to attract attention and time of consumers, and give them fun and enjoyment (Barišić, 2017), so it important to put them in relation not just from the perspective of their impact on consumers, but also from the perspective of their impact on company's or destinations marketing communication.

Social and traditional media are similar in many ways. Both types of media contain the same forms of content, i.e. text, sound, and photos, or combination, and their availability depends on the coverage of the signal (e.g. radio signal, TV signal, Internet signal) (Barišić, 2017). They are a source of information, and they influence on consumer behavior. They represent a hyper-reality (media are a substitute for personal experiences and relationships with other people (Antonides & van Raaij, 1998, p. 392)), offer a certain level of interactivity, are a tool for public relations, through them communication between businesses and consumers is realized, and consequently, they have an impact on the companies (Stephen & Galak, 2009) or tourist destinations marketing performances.

On the other hand, the differences between traditional and social media are following; on traditional media dominates beautified content generated by marketing managers, whose primary focus is to introduce consumers with the brand through one-way, and mass-controlled communication. On social media, consumers are the ones who generate authentic content and seek to achieve two-way communication both with each other, as well as with service providers, and that communication is not directly influenced by marketing managers (Barišić, 2017). Consequently, consumers spend an increasing proportion of their time on social media compared to traditional media and turn away from traditional media as a source of information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Sjöberg, 2010), which is particularly reflected in tourism (Nielsen & Liburd, 2008).

Trust is another aspect that significantly differentiates traditional and social media. Consumers do not trust traditional media as they once did (eMarketer, 2007). In fact, they reduce their reliance on advertising as a source of information that leads to the decision making, and purchase itself (Mangold & Faulds, 2009: 361). Consumers perceive social media as a more reliable and trustworthy source of information about products and services compared to paid communication transmitted through traditional media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Consequently, traditional media and traditional forms of marketing communication are constantly losing ground as influencers in consumer behavior compared to social media (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008: 237).

Investment in traditional media also record a decline, while on the other hand, investment in social media are increasing (Brunswick, 2018; GroupM, 2013). Money that had been previously spent on print and electronic advertising is now diverted to social media. Looking historically, companies have controlled information and their flow through one-way communication through traditional media (O'Guinn, Allen & Semenik, 2009, p. 47). But now, throw social media there is a shift in a traditional marketing approach, that enable companies to build long lasting relationships with their consumers (Drury, 2008, p. 275; Gardmaher, 2010), and create dialogue with a key audience (Briones et al, 2011) at very low costs (Gardmaher, 2010) compared to traditional media (Ammirato, 2010; Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schäfer, 2012, p. 784-785; Byeong, 2011, p. 30; Kirtis & Karahan, 2011, p. 267). Due to aspect of the cost reduction, it is believed that social media has become the most desirable marketing tool in the business environment, and the best way to reach the consumers after the global recession (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011, p. 261).

Proposed hypothesis about the importance of traditional and social media in tourist destination choice setting

Today, social media are increasingly replacing traditional media (Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schäfer, 2012), and the reason for this is that they provide a higher level of interactivity compared to the traditional media (Ruggiero, 2000). The users are also turning away from traditional media towards increased use of social media during information search (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and they consider social media trustworthy source of information compared to the traditional instruments of marketing communication used by the companies (Foux, 2006). Viral spread of information through social media has a far greater reach than in the case of traditional media (Keller, 2009; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and proportion of time spent on media in favor of social media over traditional media is growing. Therefore, it is assumed that the importance of social media has overcome the importance of traditional media in tourist destination choice, and the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H1: Social media has more significant influence than traditional media in tourist destination choice.

## Methodology

*Measurement and data collection*

To get a deeper insight into the subject of the research, secondary research of a relevant foreign literature has been conducted, and based on it, preliminary pilot research on the sample of two focus groups. One focus group was made of Croatian experts who are professionally involved in social media, or tourism promotion on the Internet, and the another one of average vacation Croatian tourists who frequently use social media. Their experiences and perceptions of the importance of the observed social media platforms in tourism, and destination choice, with previously conducted secondary research were used to create highly structured questionnaire in Croatian language. The questionnaire was created with the help of Google Forms app. In total there were 21 questions in the questionnaire, but only part of them were used for further analysis and preparation of this paper. To test the attitudes of the respondents a 5-point Likertscale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) was used. Link to the questionnaire was distributed by e-mail (deliberate sample) to more than 7.000 e-mail addresses of Croatian tourists who are at the same time users of at least one of the four observed social media platforms. All of them were asked to forward the questionnaire to their contacts (snowball sample). In order to increase the interest in participation in the study, prize game was organized (Illum, John & Liang, 2010, p. 340). During the four months of the research, 1.057 valid questionnaires were collected. On them, the further analyses were conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics, with the support of SPSS 17.

**Results**

*Demographic characteristics*

The study included 1.057 respondents, mostly female (73.1%). Only 23.9% of the respondents were male. Younger respondents dominated, so the largest percentage of the respondents (39.1%) was 25-34 years old, followed by middle age respondents, 35-44 years old (26.9%). If we observe the level of education, most of the respondents were those with bachelor's degree (46.9%), and least with doctorate (10.9%). According to the average monthly income, most of the respondents (42.9%) were with intermediate income (approximately 7.237 HRK), which is still more than the Croatian average.

**Table 1.** Profile of respondents

| Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Characteristics | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | | Level of education | | |
| Male | 284 | 26.9 | High school degree | 153 | 14.5 |
| Female | 773 | 73.1 | College degree | 135 | 12.8 |
| Total | 1.057 | 100.0 | Bachelor's degree | 496 | 46.9 |
| Age (years) | | | Master's degree / University specialist | 158 | 14.9 |
| 18-24 | 123 | 11.6 | PhD | 115 | 10.9 |
| 25-34 | 414 | 39.1 | Total | 1.057 | 100.0 |
| 35-44 | 284 | 26.9 | Personal monthly income | | |
| 45-54 | 155 | 14.7 | Up to 4.000 kn | 157 | 14.8 |
| 55-64 | 73 | 6.9 | 4.001-8.000 | 452 | 42.9 |
| 65 and more | 5 | 0.5 | 8.001-12.000 | 231 | 21.8 |
| Unknown | 3 | 0.3 | 12.001-16.000 | 56 | 5.3 |
| Total | 1.057 | 100.0 | 16.001 and more kn | 12 | 1.1 |
| | | | Unknown | 149 | 14.1 |
| | | | Total | 1.057 | 100.0 |

Source: Authors survey

To determine the importance of traditional and social media in tourist destination choice, first it was examined which media influence less and which influence more to the choice of a tourist destination. The intensity of the influence has been expressed with usual scale of 1 (no influence) to 5 (strong influence). Out of the eight media in question four were traditional media (TV, newspapers and magazines, radio, and posters), and four were social media (Facebook, YouTube, TripAdvisor and Booking.com). Absolute frequencies obtained for the observed eight media are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The intensity of the influence of traditional and social media on the tourist destination choice

| Media | The intensity of the influence | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 = no influence | 2 = little influence | 3 = moderate influence | 4 = influence | 5 = strong influence | |
| 1. TV | 105 | 165 | 358 | 312 | 117 | 1.057 |
| 2. Facebook | 229 | 192 | 283 | 259 | 94 | 1.057 |
| 3. Newspapers and magazines | 89 | 175 | 393 | 313 | 87 | 1.057 |
| 4. YouTube | 177 | 211 | 326 | 261 | 82 | 1.057 |
| 5. Radio | 359 | 270 | 299 | 107 | 22 | 1.057 |
| 6. TripAdvisor | 469 | 138 | 173 | 189 | 88 | 1.057 |
| 7. Posters | 214 | 263 | 356 | 174 | 50 | 1.057 |
| 8. Booking.com | 316 | 120 | 212 | 255 | 154 | 1.057 |
| Total | 1.958 | 1.464 | 2.400 | 1.870 | 694 | 1.057 |
| a) Traditional media | 767 | 873 | 1.406 | 906 | 276 | 4.228 |
| b) Social media | 1.191 | 661 | 994 | 964 | 418 | 4.228 |
| Total | 1.958 | 1.464 | 2.400 | 1.870 | 694 | 8.456 |

Source: Authors survey

According to the respondents (Table 2), traditional media mainly have moderate influence on the choice of a tourist destinations (TV, newspapers and magazines, posters) or do not have any influence (radio). With the social media the influence is more versatile. The lowest influence has TripAdvisor and Booking.com, while the moderate influence has Facebook and YouTube. From the mentioned absolute frequencies and their modal values, it is difficult to conclude where the influnce (on the whole) is the lower, and where it is greater: among the traditional media or the social media. The answer can be found in the following table (Table 3) based on the arithmetic means of particular media, and the arithmetic means of two observed groups of media.

**Table 3.** Descriptive indicators of the intensity of influence for particular traditional and social media on tourist destination choice

| Media | Arithmetic mean | Standard deviation | Coefficient of variation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. TV | 3.16 | 1.125 | 36 |
| 2. Facebook | 2.81 | 1.270 | 45 |
| 3. Newspapers and magazines | 3.13 | 1.055 | 34 |
| 4. YouTube | 2.87 | 1.188 | 41 |
| 5. Radio | 2.21 | 1.083 | 49 |
| 6. TripAdvisor | 2.33 | 1.402 | 60 |
| 7. Posters | 2.61 | 1.122 | 43 |
| 8. Booking.com | 2.82 | 1.450 | 51 |
| Total | 2.88 | 1.322 | 46 |
| a) Traditional media | 2.78 | | |
| b) Social media | 2.71 | | |

Source: Authors survey

The statements on the intensity of influence for traditional and social media on tourist destination choice presented below Table 2, now can be more accurately expressed based on the arithmetic means in Table 3. The lowest influence has radio (average is 2.21), while the strongest influence has TV (3.16), as well as newspapers and magazines (3.13), and then posters (2.61). Among social media, the strongest influence has YouTube (average is 2.87), followed by Booking.com (2.82), Facebook (2.81), and finally TripAdvisor (2.33). Looking at the whole picture, strongest influence has traditional media (2.78) compared to the observed social media (2.71). Dispersion of the respondents' opinions about the intensity of influence for media is mostly moderate (coefficients of variation are between 24% and 52%). But for the TripAdvisor the dispersion of the answers is severe (60%) which means that the opinions of the respondents are heterogeneous.

From these arithmetic means greater importance of traditional media over social media (2.78> 2.71) is visible, but it is necessary to determine whether this difference is small and random, or it can be considered large and significant. For each respondent was calculated median score for traditional media, and median score for social media since both have had four specific types of media. To test the difference, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used. Its results are listed in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Comparison of importance for traditional and social media in destination choice - using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test

| Variables | Groups of media | Frequency | Middle rank | Mann Whitney U test | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The influence of traditional media and social media on tourist destination choice | traditional<br>social | 1.057<br>1.057 | 1.089,27<br>1.025,73 | 52.5047,5 | -2.423 | 0.015 |

Source: Authors survey

Based on the results from Table 4 it can be concluded that the importance of traditional media in relation to social media during the tourist choice is statistically significantly different (p = 0.015). Based on the mid-ranks in U test the influence of traditional media is significantly greater, it heavily weighted in relation to the influence of social media. Thus, the hypothesis H1 which said, "Social media has more significant influence than traditional media in tourist destination choice" is not accepted. And to the surprise of the authors traditional media still have primacy over social media in the context of tourism and tourism destination choice.

**Discussion and conclusion**

In the previous chapter it has already been pointed out that the obtained results surprised the authors, because nowadays a lot of attention is paid to social media, about them practitioners and researchers intensively speak and write. While they sometimes forget traditional media, especially radio, which has been proven to be the least important also by this research. The results show that traditional media are still more important than social media in tourist destination choice and should not be ignored and replaced by social media by marketing managers when promoting the products of their tourist destinations. The combination of the traditional media and social media in the promotion of tourist destinations, in the future will achieve the greater success. The question arises: "What can justify such research findings in the age of the Internet revolution and social media?" The answer lies in the tourism product and the choice of tourist destination, which, despite the sometimes overwhelming amount of information, is still perceived as a high-risk decision due to potentially unknown elements of the destination, as well as the lack of tourist experience (Woodside i Lysonski, 1989). And as long as there are tourist trips and destinations, they will always be associated with perception of risk, and the security will be sought through various sources of information (traditional and social media).

But not all traditional media are equally important for destination choice, just like all social media. Traditional media that have the greatest importance in this context are TV, and among print publications newspapers and magazines. They are followed by posters and radio. Among social media, the strongest influence has YouTube, and then Booking.com, Facebook, and finally TripAdvisor. The influence of all four observed social media platforms are significantly lower than the influence of TV and print publications.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on consumer behaviour in tourism, as it provides the first insight into the relationship between traditional and social media in tourist destination choice setting in Croatia. The limitation of this paper is primarily because research focuses on four social media platforms, so conclusions only apply to those four platforms, and not to all social media. The survey was conducted on a sample of Croatian tourists. Such a restriction can be correlated with a specific representation of social media in the country and habits in the use of goods and services, such as travel services.

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