

The importance of preserving destination space and local identity in the context of sustainable development in tourism

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Abstract

A sustainable tourist destination and its content are becoming targets of growing tourism of specific interests. Visits to art or sports events are increasingly part of shorter vacations during weekends or holidays. At the same time, on the global tourist market, the interest of tourism consumers in tangible and intangible cultural heritage is growing, as well as the interest in rural tourism in a peaceful rural environment with traditional values. Interest in ancient culture is the focus of interest of modern consumers, as well as cycling, hunting, green - eco tourism, cruise travel, travel for health - Medical Spa, food and drink tourism, and especially wine tourism. Tourism is a changing, dynamic activity that adapts to increasingly demanding and sophisticated tourism consumers who have changed in the last ten years with a different way of life, pace, style and standard, working hours and the fact that they no longer go on vacation once a year. The aim of this work is to point out the importance of protecting the destination area and preserving local identity.

Keywords: destination space, protection of destination space, preservation of local identity, sustainable tourism

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Introduction

The resident population depends on the environment through the integrated tourism product. Deterioration of the environment through the consumption of natural resources, air and water pollution significantly reduces the destination's competitiveness on the international tourist market, but also reduces the chances for the development of the destination and its destination values. The authenticity, that is, the uniqueness of a sustainable tourist destination is understood as diversity based on the existing natural and cultural attractiveness of the destination and the created tourist-recreational attractiveness. The foundation of building the destination's attractiveness and authenticity is based on the protection and presentation of natural and cultural resources and their sustainable use for the development of tourism in the future. The development of a sustainable tourist destination on the global tourist market is impossible today without reserved space as a fundamental destination value intended for various tourist purposes and activities. As space in tourist destinations is limited and a fundamental destination resource, its use represents an inherently conflicting situation because there are no prospects for equal distribution between all stakeholders. Identities of tourist destinations in most studies are presented from the aspect of regional and local development, especially from the aspect of economic development, while symbolic and emotional aspects of the relationship towards the tourist destination and the environment of the domicile population are given less attention. The recognizability of the tourist destination, and thus the recognizability of the environment, their uniqueness and inimitability, and on the other hand the attachment of the local population to such an identity-rounded and self-satisfied environment represent an obvious development resource, necessary for achieving and maintaining sustainability.

Protection of the destination area

From a tourist perspective, space is important as an attraction base and factor of the offer of each tourist destination. Landscape can be defined as segment of space with typical characteristics, patterns and structures (Pichard, 2011) and includes "all visible features of a certain space, often taking into account the degree of aesthetic value of the space" (Terkenli, 2004). Space is not a one-dimensional physical and material concept and is I can observe its values from several aspects, namely natural values, ecological values, cultural values and aesthetic values. According to Muller (2004), the natural values of the space represent a set of characteristics of the space, namely: these features of the area: climate, water, flora and fauna and protected natural heritage. Ecological values refer to the degree of preservation of environmental and biological quality diversity (Li, Wu, 2004). Pichard describes the cultural values of the area (2011) and points out that they are a reflection of the way the space is used the culture and identity of the community that lives in a certain area.

Space protection in a sustainable tourist destination refers to the permanent use and preservation of the destination's space for a specific purpose that is defined by the destination's sustainable development plans and the vision and desire of the sustainable destination to permanently protect particularly valuable spaces and/or public goods and for which the destination defines certain forms and protection systems. A sustainable tourist destination with its protection program protects areas with exceptional, special and rare values, goods and resources, with natural and cultural heritage, ambient and landscape values and limited, unrestored and/or partially restored natural resources. In its spatial plans, sustainable development in tourism puts the preservation of nature first, emphasizing the need for categorization that places valuable phenomena under protection, not for the sake of economic development, but for the sake of preservation and protection. The concept of environmental protection includes the establishment of a legal regime on the basis of which the protection of certain parts of destination values is carried out: soil, water, sea, air, forests, human health, plant and animal life, especially valuable parts of nature, cultural and historical values, and protection from ionizing radiation, poisons, chemical materials, noise, waste disposal and more. Sustainable tourist destinations base their concepts on three fundamental theories about the ethical attitudes of man towards nature, i.e. the environment that surrounds him (according to Omejec, 1998:27):

- anthropocentric theory - is based on care for natural life relationships based on human well-being, especially for future generations. Generally recognized ethical values are part of the anthropocentric theory that understands the environment according to the appropriate existing standards of value, where nature and the environment are mere objects of regulation;
- the theory of eco-centric environmental protection - understands nature as a value for itself, and its protection as a right of nature itself;
- resource-economic theory - observes the protection of natural resources, especially those that are renewable from the aspect of economic usefulness.

A sustainable tourist destination in order to achieve sustainable development must set ecological criteria in defining future destination development, but also concrete ecological standards that will be quickly and efficiently incorporated into the existing way of production, consumption and general behaviour of consumers in tourism and the resident population. The problems of environmental protection in tourist destinations are very complex, interconnected and conditional. To see and solve them, efforts and numerous original technological solutions adapted to the tourist offer are necessary.

Preservation of local identity

Destination identity is one of the most powerful tools that consumers use to differentiate destinations (Bridson and Evans, 2004; Pitt et al., 2007). Aguilar et al. (2014) emphasize that destinations that want to be different i to build a strong market brand should be created destination identity in order to direct consumer behaviour. Stokburger-Sauer (2011) states that tourists who feel concordance between identities destination and their own identity they like to visit these locations.

A good knowledge of the elements of identity is important for preserving local identity in the face of globalization. The local identity of a sustainable tourist destination must reflect the physical attributes of the destination and the culture specific to the historical and contemporary dimension of the domicile population and includes destination values, attitudes and beliefs of the domicile population, customs and rituals, language and communication, myths and legends, symbols and the physical appearance of the destination. Sustainable destination values are important for the survival and development of the destination, while rituals and customs as part of the culture of the domicile population are established forms of behaviour and with them the identification of the domicile population and the destination is strengthened and habits of behaviour, manners and interpersonal relations are created. Symbols are an integral part of every culture that conveys fundamental ideas about the sustainable values of a destination. The identity of a tourist destination and/or environment can be observed through the eyes of tourists, as the idea that those who visit it have about the destination, but also from the inside, that is, through the eyes of those who live there. For the purposes of this paper, the identity of the tourist destination will be approached through the perception of those who live in the destination.

Sustainable development in tourism promotes the policy of investing in sustainable tourist destinations that are in accordance with the peculiarities and specificities of a certain local area and does not allow the decay and destruction of local culture and heritage. Sustainable development in tourism in its conception starts from the assumption that, precisely in the time of globalization, there is a chance for the valorisation of cultural heritage, local culture of a sustainable destination and its identity, and the promotion of the aforementioned values. A sustainable tourist destination has the role of properly directing its development concepts, simultaneously preserving and affirming local identity and cultural values with which it can participate equally in global processes. Indigenous sustainable tourist destinations reside in areas marked by cultural forms and landscapes of refined spirit, refinement, art and ethics where differences in cultural elements touch, intertwine, communicate, but also clash. Culture is a collective phenomenon, which promotes certain values, deeply rooted in the destination and slowly changing over time. The system of destination values, which is primarily the result of culture, strongly influences the definition of laws, the establishment of institutions, and the shaping of norms of behaviour of the resident population in a certain society. Finally, each consumer in tourism, under the influence of

the culture of the society to which he belongs, brings with him a certain system of values and certain expectations to the chosen tourist destination. The culture of a nation is characterized by different feelings, a system of values, passions, interests, love, hatred and all other feelings that reside in man, the bearer of culture. In their definitions of culture, sociologists and culturologists Lesly White and E.V. Sokolov believe that culture is a reality, an entity sui generis, a self-developing system, a set of all processes, changes and creations that arose as a result of the material and spiritual intervention of human society in nature, society and thought. Each culture signifies creativity, intellectual reference, pattern of new values, artistic perfection, creativity, humanity, refinement, education and intelligence. However, in the background of every culture there are conspiracies, blood, sweat, prejudices, crimes and genocide. Cultural buildings that are admired today by consumers in tourism (the Great Wall of China, Egyptian and Mexican pyramids, castles, fortresses, medieval cities) as cultural wonders, in addition to the characteristics of creativity, creativity and intellect, they were, in fact, created by human lives, blood and sweat, torture, different forms of dying. If we observe culture in sociological and political discourse, then it can be concluded that cultures, as well as civilizations and ideologies, meet, touch, communicate with each other, permeate, collide, and even conflict.

Natural and historical heritage belongs to everyone, and all people have the right, but also the responsibility, to recognize, appreciate and preserve the universal values of natural and cultural heritage. Biological diversity, cultural heritage and living culture are the main tourist attractions. In the past ten years, sustainable tourism has become a phenomenon of unprecedented proportions that can be an opportunity, but also a threat in relation to culture, depending on who and how manages cultural destination values and their valorisation on the tourist market. Given that the participation of cultural tourism in overall tourism movements, as well as consumer awareness of the need for better information and greater responsibility towards cultural material and intangible wealth is greater, after decades of non-culture and the dominance of an ostracized value system, tourism has the role of preserving and protecting local identity.

Application of the principles of responsible tourism in order to preserve the identity of the destination

The success of a sustainable tourist destination in the global tourism market is impossible without a well-designed vision. The vision of sustainable tourist destinations must start from the primary need to raise the quality of the local population of the tourist destination, preserve the tradition and inherited cultural and historical destination values, and the need to design an integrated tourist product that will provide consumers in tourism with a pleasant and unforgettable experience. The vision of a sustainable tourist destination can only be achieved if the basic principles of sustainable development are respected and if realistic and concrete goals for the development of the tourist destination are set. The fundamental principles of responsible tourism as an

attractive tourist destination that bases its own concept of tourist development on various activities and events intended for consumers in tourism are (Blanke at all, 2010:113):

- Respecting the principles of sustainable development - The fundamental starting point of modern tourism is the preservation of space as a medium in which tourist activities are designed and subsequently carried out. That is why it is important to actively manage the space in such a way that its fundamental values are preserved to the greatest extent possible. This means, first of all, careful spatial planning, the arrangement of public areas and, in general, concern for the arrangement of the destination and protection against 'visual pollution' of the space. In addition, sustainable development is also reflected in the concern for social aspects, which refers to the attractiveness of living in a sustainable tourist destination and the retention of the local population, as well as economic aspects that are reflected in the realization of economic benefits;
- Environmental protection – preserved nature of high aesthetic value from any pollution. That is why a sustainable tourist destination must continuously take care of the quality of water, soil, and air, maintain biological diversity and dispose of waste in a manner defined by law;
- Preservation of inherited values - the wealth of inherited cultural resources needs to be restored and preserved in their original forms, and a positive attitude towards the traditions of life and work of the resident population of the tourist destination must also be encouraged.

Partnership of development stakeholders and a pro-active attitude - developed cooperation between all development stakeholders will ensure a quality integrated tourism product for the consumer in tourism. That is why cooperation in all areas is important, such as cooperation on joint marketing, joint development of tourist destination projects and raising the recognition of the destination on the global tourist market.

Research methodology

Empirical research based on the collection of primary data was conducted in the field using the survey method, where the basic instrument for data collection was a survey questionnaire printed in Croatian and English, created on the basis of previously conducted research with similar features. The survey questionnaire was created based on the analysis of numerous previously consulted scientific and professional literature (Guidelines: Survey procedures for Tourism Economic Impact Assessments of Gated Events and Festivals, Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative – Research Guidance & Template, Estimating the Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events: a

research guide, A Guide to running green meetings and events, Estimating the Economic Benefits of Event Tourism. finds historical heritage and heritage tourism events on the basis of a deliberate sample, by random selection. The research was conducted in the pre-season period, from June 25. until 10.07.2022. on a sample of 253 tourists with the aim of determining the role and significance of cultural heritage and the protection of the destination area in creating the identity of the destination. Furthermore, the aim of the paper is to point out the connection between the protection of the destination area and the satisfaction of tourists.

Various factors in the area of tourism demand and supply of heritage-based events (heritage object, heritage site, cultural institutions) are of great importance for the long-term survival and success of a heritage-based tourism event and have a significant impact on the overall destination and its sustainability. The connection and influence of the factors of the attractiveness of the heritage object and the event based on the heritage is connected with the historical significance of the locality and the protection of the destination area. The historical importance and the diversity of the tourist destination's offer is a key factor for the success of a heritage-based tourist event, which has a positive effect on the competitiveness of the tourist destination. The data collected using the survey questionnaire are true and based on them, the hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

In accordance with the above, the hypotheses of the work were set:

Hypothesis H1: The quality of the organization of a heritage-based tourist event has a positive impact on the recognition and growth of the competitive advantages of the destination where it takes place.

Hypothesis H2: The quality of the protected destination space has a positive influence on the overall satisfaction of tourists visiting a heritage-based event.

Hypothesis H3: Protected destination space is positively correlated with destination identity and recognition.

On the basis of the conducted survey, a large number of empirical analyses were made in which, using descriptive statistical methods and computer programs SPSS and MS Excel, the assessment of quantitative relationships of statistical variables, research of general tendencies, and the regularity and legality of phenomena was carried out.

Results

Table 1. Respondents according to basic characteristics

Number (%) of respondents	
Sex	
Men	91 (36)
Women	162 (64)
Age of the respondents	
to 25 years	32 (12,6)
26 – 35	57 (22,5)
36 – 45	92 (36,4)
46 – 55	38 (15,0)
56 – 65	26 (10,3)
More than 66 years	8 (3,2)
Level of education	
Completed elementary school	10 (4,0)
High school education	80 (31,6)
Higher professional education / Bachelor's degree	68 (26,9)
Higher vocational education/ Master of profession	87 (34,4)
Doctoral studies	8 (3,2)

Source: author's work

Table 1 shows the basic characteristics of the respondents. Regarding gender, there are 162 (64%) women and 91 (36%) men. The majority of respondents are aged 36-45, 92 of them (36.4%), 32 (12.6%) under 25, 57 (22.5%) between 26-35, 38 (15%) respondents are aged 46-55, 26 (10.3%) respondents are 56-65 years old, while 8 (3.2%) respondents are over 66 years old. According to the level of education, 87 (34.4%) of the respondents have a higher professional degree/master's degree, 80 (31.6%) have a secondary professional degree, while 68 (26.9%) have a higher professional degree/bachelor's degree. The least number of respondents, 8 (3.2 %) have a doctoral degree, and only 10 (4.0 %) have completed elementary school.

From Table 2, it can be seen that the majority, 174 (68.8%), are employed persons, 22 (8.7%) are retired, 16 (6.3%) are students, 11 (4.3%) are students. while there are a smaller number of respondents with their own OPG, craftsmen or respondents of some other employment. According to the number of household members, 125 (49.4%) respondents live in a household with 4-7 people, 124 (49%) with 1-3 people, while only 4 (1.6%) respondents state that they live in a joint household with 8 and more people.

Table 2. *Distribution of respondents according to type of employment and number of household members*

Number (%) of respondents	
Employment	
Disciple	11 (4,3)
Student	16 (6,3)
Employed person	174 (68,8)
An unemployed person	18 (7,1)
A pensioner	22 (8,7)
Own OPG	1 (0,4)
Artisan	9 (3,6)
Else	2 (0,8)
Number of household members	
from 1 – 3 person	124 (49,0)
4 – 7 person	125 (49,4)
8 and more person	4 (1,6)

Source: author's work

Table 3 shows that the Cronbach Alpha coefficient is 0.801, which indicates that the used measurement scales have a high level of reliability. The statements were evaluated on five-point Likert-type scales: from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The composite score is calculated as the sum of assessments on individual statements - higher scores indicate a perception of greater protection of the destination area and the necessity of identity management.

Table 3. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.801	.792	20

Source: author's work

It is advisable to strengthen the identity of the offer of island tourism on a sustainable model, taking care that the chosen strategic approach does not endanger the environment and existing resources. A component of the overall identity of the destination is the protection of nature, and thus the diversity of biological species, which is also a prerequisite for the development of some special tourist products in the segment of offers for divers, sports fishermen, cycling, walking, running, etc. Implementation of total, diverse, tourist resources in recognition of the destination, in addition to strengthening the existing identity, and thus the competitiveness of the tourist offer, also contributes to more efficient protection of all resources.

Globalization processes and the changes they have caused to the behaviour of tourist demand have raised the expected quality standards for receptive tourist markets (Senečić, 1997, 58). In this sense, additional tourist facilities and attractions of the tourist offer, primarily based on the identity of the destination, are today becoming an imperative for efficient market communication. A specific tourist offer must necessarily combine all available resources that can be used by tourists. The emission tourism market is intensively fragmenting, and new forms of tourist needs and new segments of tourist demand are emerging. This is an additional argument that in the process of branding the destination, all potential tourist values and the original identity of the destination's natural content are used exactly.

Table 4. ANOVA

Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
The organization of a tourism event based on heritage has a positive impact on the recognition of the destination Areas with a clearly expressed identity have greater chances for development	Between Groups	65,729	4	16,432	28,680	<,001
	Within Groups	93,390	163		,573	
	Total	159,119	167			
Protection of the destination area has a positive impact on tourist satisfaction	Between Groups	44,590	4	11,148	14,264	<,001
	Within Groups	127,386	163		,782	
	Total	171,976	167			

Source: author's work

As the results of one-way ANOVA suggest, destinations that base the organization of a tourism event on cultural heritage and a protected destination area differed significantly from those with an unprotected destination area and cultural heritage without protection, thus confirming hypotheses H1 and H2.

Satisfaction with the destination is the result of the tourist's evaluation about their experiences in the destination. Tourists evaluate all the products and services they consume during their vacation, as well as their interaction with tourism stakeholders in the destination, so will be satisfied if their expectations are met or dissatisfied if they are not. According to the results shown in Table 4, there is a positive relationship and a positive effect between the variables of destination identity, protection of the destination space and tourist satisfaction.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and The – Smirnov "normality" Kolmogorov a test on the role and significance of identity

Descriptive statistics							The -Smirnov „normality”	Kolmogorov test for
Results	N	Min	Max.	Average	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variation	Statistics	P value
Adjust the visual appearance of the destination to the fundamental values of the destination's identity that they want to stand out	253	1	5	3.815	0.828	25.041	0.325	0.000
Destinations that have sufficient relevant resources and an identity where it is possible to create recognizable and competitive destination brands are more recognizable and therefore have a greater chance of implementing sustainable tourism	253	1	5	4.011	0.437	28.517	0.299	0.000
The significance and potential of an efficient approach to the protection of destination resources is possible through the process of unifying all available resources, which are in the function of synergistic development of the overall tourist offer based on the original identity of the destination	253	1	5	4.254	0.910	25.108	0.249	0.000
Additional tourist facilities and	253	1	5	3.983	0.937	26.924	0.221	0.000

The construct "Adjust the visual appearance of the destination to the fundamental values of the destination's identity that they want to stand out" was rated with an average rating of 3.815 and a standard deviation of $\sigma=0.828$, making it the least rated construct. The construct "The significance and potential of an efficient approach to the protection of destination resources is possible through the process of unifying all available resources, which are in the function of synergistic development of the overall" was rated with the highest average score of 4.254 and a standard deviation of $\sigma= 0.910$ tourist offer based on the original identity of the destination". The more detailed results are shown in table 5. They show extremely high average scores regarding the identity construct, and point to the necessity of protecting the destination's space and identity.

Discussion

The process of creating recognition of a destination in the function of strengthening its identity begins with the recognition of relevant tourist resources. In such an approach, identity is both a starting point, but also a consequence of historical events in that area, shown in table 5. Based on identity, an image is formed over time, which represents the perception of those who come to the destination, as investors or as guests. By not accepting the created image and further communicating that framework, all available resources are being consciously ignored. This weakens tourism competitiveness, recognition, but also the original identity of the destination. In order to avoid this, it is useful to determine deviations from the set vision and mission of the destination's future tourist development through a comparative analysis of the existing tourist perception.

Identity of the destination is a prerequisite for the effective positioning of the year-round tourist offer, but also for the strengthening of the identity itself. Destinations on the Adriatic are specific for their valuable historical and cultural heritage, and future recognition and competitiveness should be created on all available resources, including those that may not meet the necessary criteria for branding individual specialized tourist products. The brand of the island, in addition to strengthening the competitiveness of the tourist offer, also contributes to the efficient protection of tourist resources. Destinations with a strong identity are rich in natural, historical and cultural elements that have the potential to attract tourists, which points to the conclusion that a few attractions are not enough to speak of a built destination with a recognizable identity. One of the greatest contributions of this paper is the importance of the role of identity in the concept of protecting natural and cultural destination values, and in attracting tourists and in creating their satisfaction and experience in the destination. However, this research has several limitations. The first limitation concerns the sample size. Secondly, the author of the paper collected data in the pre-season, which means that in future research we should get answers from tourists in the high season (July and August) and in the low season (September). The identity unites all the resources of the destination that are used in the formation, and for future research it would be especially useful to accept the efforts of the

destination in all components of the identity based on originality and truthfulness, so that the identity of the destination could be connected with its symbolic significance as authentically as possible. Given that identity is viewed as a component of physical characteristics (spatial identity) and as a component of social characteristics (cultural-historical and national identity), it should be viewed in the tourism sector from the aspect of geographical location, existing natural attractions, cultural-historical heritage as and the aspect of national identity, i.e. the local population of the observed tourist destination.

Conclusion

A component of the overall identity of the destination is the protection of nature, and thus the diversity of biological species, which is also a prerequisite for the development of some special tourist products in the segment of offers for divers, sports fishermen, cycling, walking, running, etc. Implementation of total, diverse, tourist resources in recognition of the destination, in addition to strengthening the existing identity, and thus the competitiveness of the tourist offer, also contributes to more efficient protection of all resources.

Globalization processes and the changes they have caused to the behaviour of tourist demand have raised the expected quality standards for receptive tourist markets (Senečić, 1997, 58). In this sense, additional tourist facilities and attractions of the tourist offer, primarily based on the identity of the destination, are today becoming an imperative for efficient market communication. A specific tourist offer must necessarily unite all available Movement of people from their place of residence to the nearer or further surroundings, to the place of experience and experiences, has been a need of people since the existence of human society. Movements, as the backbone of tourism, have different motives, duration, smaller or larger number of participants, are individual, family and/or group. A large number of consumers participate in tourism today. Tourism, more than any other activity, depends on the environment of the tourist destination, because only an unpolluted environment with protected and preserved cultural and historical values can be the basis of successful tourism. Also, tourism is a direct user of the environment, given that almost all consumer activities in tourism are based on the use of the environment and direct impact on the environment (swimming, diving, fishing, walking, cycling, etc.). Regardless of the type of tourism, tourism causes a number of positive and negative effects on the environment. A sustainable tourist destination represents a relatively larger, functional, spatial entity that builds its tourist identity on the concept of cumulative destination values and the implementation of the concept of sustainable development in tourism. The attractiveness, attractiveness and autochthonism's of a sustainable tourist destination enable the experience and, with additional infrastructure, represent a space for intensive gathering of consumers in tourism that does not devastate natural values, cultural and historical monuments and other attractions that are the primary motive for choosing a tourist destination. A sustainable tourist destination implies a variety of products, services, natural

resources, created resources and information that are capable of attracting a certain number of tourism consumers to a sustainable tourist destination.

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