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From Genuine 'Greenery,' Tradition, . . . , to Rural Tourism

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Individual business ideas are, besides courage and a favourable business environment, the essence of rural tourism development. Local, regional, national and international funds undoubtedly help to realize ideas as well as create entrepreneurially friendly business environments. Thus, many private initiatives and training opportunities for established entrepreneurs and beginners are supported. This way unspoiled nature and many examples of fascinating (autochthonous) traditions could be economically valorised, which means for a certain price offered to visitors/tourists: traditional customs and events, cuisine and other examples of tangible and intangible heritage as well as diversity of landscape (including cultural landscape), abundant animal and plant life, various habitat types, and diverse geography. In this special issue, some sociocultural end economic topics of rural tourism are highlighted.

Kavrečič and Hrobat Virloget, in their ethnological research, focused on traditional festivities of the countywide. They investigated how people of North Istria perceive local intangible heritage. The results show that a significate element of the break of the tradition of *šagre* (a typical Istrian village event/festival) can be found in the massive post-WWII migrations in the rural part of Istria. It has also been shown how vital for the tradition to survive is its adaptation to the contemporary needs of the present and, this way, these events are already linking to the so-called special interest tourism. However, local people do differentiate between traditional *šagra* and the contemporary 'massive' events that are more tourist-oriented. This means that they offer thematic products to tourists/visitors, which include the presentation of 'olden days' customs, dresses etc. that represent a 'staged authenticity.'

Similarly, Drpić and Rudan focused on a heritage-based event, but in continental Croatia (Slavonia). Đakovo Embroidery Festival, significantly marked by rural character, is considered more from a commercial tourism perspective; issues related to the promotion (of Croatian rural destinations), respecting their characteristics (quality) and uniqueness are at the forefront of research (including empirical analyse). In order to increase/promote competitiveness of heritage-based cultural events of rural areas, the authors suggest an event certification model – CroRuralisHeritage Awards Certification Model – which includes three dimensions: heritage (tangible and intangible), event (Đakovo Embroidery), and rural destination (Đakovo). The proposed model should find its place in the pool of all possible models focused on assessing and thus promoting different types of rural tourism and their quality.

Memorial heritage, which is considered as a distinct type of heritage, also attract people. Memorial sites as well as memorial events (commemorations), also called 'dark events,' reflect past traumatic events in the present time. In this context, Šuligoj investigated the media-constructed social reality related to dark events in the countryside of the trans-border region of Istria. World War II, as that events' historical background, dominates in all areas of Istrian countryside. Events, according to media, mostly occurred at memorials or internment sites. To some extent, this research complements the research of Kavrečič and Hrobat Virloget in a substantive way. Although, since it is

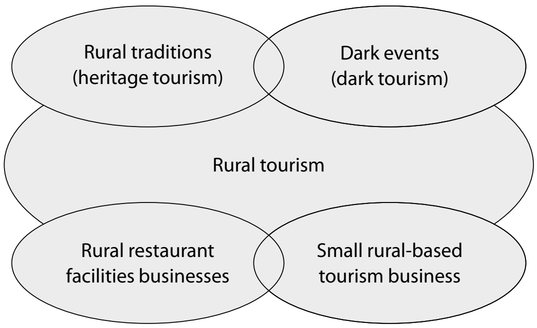

Figure 1 Thematic Structure of the Special Issue

focused on tourist exploitation, it is in this sense more related to the research of Drpić and Rudan.

Research in which rural tourism is linked or illuminated in a socio-cultural context is followed by research in which tourism is considered as an economic (or entrepreneurial) activity. Interesting research has been carried out in a particular socio-economic environment, in the post-conflict laggard economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the development of rural tourism has a different dynamic. Their evolving practices should be of interest at least to other developing countries in the wider region or elsewhere. Thus research obtains a sense of the policies/programmes that foster the growth of these types of places. Činjarević, Peštek, and Tufo, in this context, find that local providers (small rural-based tourism business) seem to have an entrepreneurial and professional attitude toward marketing actions. Their businesses promote the outstanding natural beauty to visitors, where, according to findings of abovementioned authors, the following themes can be extracted: product variety, the authenticity of experience, marketing capabilities, and business challenges.

The paper of Planinc and Kukanja has an entirely different focus with an analysis of efficiency performance of restaurants operating in the rural areas of Slovenia (the OECD and EU member state has development problems in rural areas). The authors establish that the identified lower average efficiency score is not in line with other studies of restaurant efficiency. They justify this result as being a consequence of a rural environment that is significantly different from the urban environment (or the established tourist centres), which means that the paper contributes to the growing body of literature in the field of restaurant efficiency measurement. In their second paper, the same authors investigate service quality using the DINESERV tool in restaurants operating in the rural area of Slovenian Istria. Research results indicate that restaurant managers in rural areas should emphasise the importance of the two identified quality dimensions:

1. Empathy, Responsiveness, and Assurance (ERA), and
2. Tangibles.

These finding should interest not only restaurant managers but also destination managers, who systematically work on destination quality and development strategies (not only in Slovenian Istria).

The set of topics in this special issue consists of four areas, as shown in Figure 1. Trendy sustainability is not in the forefront but is not completely ignored. An especially natural environment (merely symbolically marked in the title as 'greenery'), one of fundamental pillars of rural tourism, is not discussed in the context of (natural) sustainability. Interestingly, authors have thoroughly discussed the practices of some post-Yugoslav countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), mainly in ethnically mixed areas (Istria, Slavonia and state of Bosnia and Herzegovina). It should not be neglected that, from the tourism perspective, cultural diversity is a relevant circumstance and potential for tourism development, also in the often forgotten rural areas.

The last three articles that are not a part of the thematic issue. They have been included in this issue as they were accepted after the end of the previous editorial.

Traditional Festivities in North Istria in Terms of Authenticity and (Dis)Continuity

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This article is derived from the project Turizmo Ištriano (Programme LAS Istre), the main aim of which was to observe the intangible heritage of North Istria from an ethnological point of view, within which our focus was on traditional festivities. Instead of a tourist valorisation 'from above,' the focus of this ethnologic research was directed towards the perceptions 'from below,' on how people perceive the local intangible heritage. Questions were raised about the so-called 'authenticity,' continuity, or discontinuity of the traditions and their relation to tourism. The research has shown that a significate element of the break of tradition of *šagre* can be found in the massive migrations after WWII in the rural part of Istria, which is related to the consequences of the so-called 'Istrian exodus.' It has also been shown how vital it is for the tradition to survive is its adaptation to the needs of the present. It was shown that people do differentiate between *šagra* (local character, no tourist promotion), and the 'massive' events that are attempting to attract tourists by selling products, presentation of 'old days' customs, traditional dresses, etc. that represent a 'staged authenticity.'

Keywords: festivities, *šagra,* tradition, (dis)continuity, North Istria
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Introduction: On Tradition and Village Festivities *Šagre*

The reflections in this article are derived from the project Turizmo Ištriano (Programme LAS Istre)[1] in which the primary aim was to observe the intangible heritage of North Istria[2] from an ethnological point of view, within which our focus was on traditional festivities. The interest was also to study the correlation between traditional local festivities and the tourism industry, identifying those elements of intangible heritage that could be positioned and promoted in the tourism offerings of Northern Istria. For this purpose, we have prepared a list of intangible heritage, focusing on annual customs (tradition) and habits in the studied region. We have given evidence that the most appealing customs for tourists are the festivals, known

[1] The programme LAS Istre (Lokalna akcijska skupina za območje občin Ankaran, Izola, Koper and Piran) is a public-private partnership with the aim of acting jointly in the implementation of the Local Development Strategy of a given area and to obtain support from EU funds.

[2] The part of Istria which lies today in Slovenia. Because of the multiculturality and official Italian-Slovenian bilingualism of the region, we prefer to call it North Istria and not Slovenian Istria.

as *šagre.* This traditional event was also studied in the previous project Heritage Live: Living, Lived, Revived Cultural Heritage (Programme IPA Slovenia-Croatia 2007–2013), in which particular attention was given to the history of such events (from the 16th to the 19th century) and the so-called 'authenticity' of the intangible heritage of North Istria (see Panjek 2012).

In the frame of this project, we have decided, that instead of a tourist valorisation 'from above' we will look into peoples' perception of intangible heritage and how is a tourist promotion of these events seen by the locals. Are tourists welcome at all? Or are these festivities mostly meant for inhabitants from the area? Which festivities potentially have a tourist interest and want to attract tourists (foreign)? Are there such festivities in this area? Is this more common for new, recently 'invented' festivities or also for 'traditional' ones? These reflections have brought out questions of the so-called 'authenticity' and continuity or discontinuity of the intangible heritage in North Istria, which had not been previously explored.

The intention linked to the ethnological part of the project would be to preserve the intangible heritage of Istria and present it within a tourism framework. As mentioned above, one of the aims is to elaborate a list of intangible heritage of North Istria focusing on traditional calendar festivities, where the focus was on the kind of village festivities called *šagre.* We have concentrated on the calendar festivals in Northern Istria, conducting ethnographic fieldwork at traditional and new events (*šagre,* celebrations related to memorial events of WWII, 1st May etc.). During the fieldwork, we have though decided to focus mostly on *šagre,* since this has been and is still today one of the most widespread traditions in the field of calendar festivities and it has not received sufficient attention in the professional/scientific literature.

Ethnologists are well aware that traditions evolve and adapt to new contemporary needs of the present in order to be meaningful to members of a particular community; they also disappear when they lose meaning for the people and their collective identity. Once they cease to be changeable, they disappear and become 'fossilised' as heritage (Sims & Stephens, 2005; Kockel, 2008). Tradition is not a product of the past to be accepted passively by successors, but a 'viewpoint,' a contemporary interpretation of past events by strictly contemporary criteria. Every continuity contains change, constructions, inventions, therefore continuity is not synonymous of sameness, but changeability (Kockel, 2008, p. 12; Lenclud, 2004, pp. 124–126, 131).

This article aims to reflect on the elements of (dis)-continuity in North Istria, especially in the case of the village festivals, called *šagre,* which when speaking of the traditional village festivities, were the most discussed by our interlocutors. Usually a nostalgic picture of the countryside prevails, portrayed as 'rural idyll,' where 'frozen' tradition is locked in time and space (Poljak Istenič, 2013, pp. 108–110). This would also be the case of the observed cases in North Istria. However, if the tradition exists because it makes sense to the community, it gives the basis for identity constructions, it unites members of the community, it brings economic advantages, etc. (Poljak Istenič, 2012; Fakin Bajec, 2011, pp. 287–291), why have certain traditional festivities in North Istria disappeared, and why others have persisted?

Methodology

The interest of this paper was to study the changing of tradition in the rural area of North Istria in the period following WWII, when political, economic, social, and population changes significantly affected this area. How did these changed circumstances affect the local tradition, why and how did it change? As already explained in the introduction, we have decided to concentrate our study from a different perspective. Our focus was on the peoples' perception of intangible heritage and their relation towards its tourist promotion.

If traditionality is conceived as the kind of events with a long-lasting continuity (Habinc, 2014, pp. 114, 125; Poljak Istenič, 2008, p. 71), 'the continuity of the past in the present' (Lenclud, 2004, p. 125) or 'a set of phenomena that have been passed on from generation to generation and finally settled in the life of a community' (Poljak Istenič, 2012, p. 77), our aim was to observe (dis)continuity elements and the reasons for them.

The method implied was ethnographic. Interviews were conducted with older persons from North Istria, above the age of 60, focusing mostly on their perception of local calendar festivities, what they like or dislike and what is their opinion about changes through time and their view about the commercialisation (tourism) of these events. The interest was to question their point of view about issues such as the transformation, disappearance, and revitalisation or invention of festivities. Since *šagre* are one of the most well-known and common festivities in the studied area, we dedicated most attention to these events. While talking with our interlocutors, many other questions were raised, especially related to 'authenticity,' continuity and discontinuity. Those phenomena manifested due to specific historical circumstances, following the Second World War in Istria.

The second part of the research is derived from the anthropological method of participant observation, in which students and researchers were observing the performance of nine festivities (*šagre*) in the current year (2019), interviewing organizers of the events, but also questioning visitors about their opinion, attitudes, etc. The study also concentrated on scientific and professional literature.

Continuity Elements and 'Authenticity'

Šagre, sometimes *opasilo, semenj, fiera,* etc. in Istria, as well as in other places in Slovenia, also known as *žegnanje, proščenje, shod,* etc., have many meanings. The root of the word and history suggest that the word originally signified dedication, i.e. commemoration of the anniversary of the consecration of the church. As observed by Muženič (2012, pp. 88–89), the celebration is not performed on the annual day itself, but on the Sunday that follows. In the past, the duration was commonly from one to three days. The most important day was Sunday, starting with the Holy Mass, following by the procession through the village. A smaller celebration took place also on Monday and/or Tuesday, rarely on Saturday. As an informant said: 'the preparations of the stage for dancing usually took place on Saturday, the šagra was organized on Sunday [...] we started late in the afternoon.'[3] As known, today's šagra takes place from Friday to Sunday. The majority of visitors are coming on Saturday.[4]

People slowly transferred the word to other ecclesiastical events, such as the consecration of a chapel, an altar, the restoration of a church, etc., and slowly it was transferred to the local church patron saint, e.g., a saint or saint to whom the church is dedicated. In the word for 'fair,' Slovenian *semenj* or Italian *fiera,* a second meaning is retained: gathering people with a prominent trading function (Vilfan, 1945, pp. 18–19; 1996, 155; Kuret, 1998, p. 143; Hrobat Virloget, 2012, p. 14). In some places there are also two (Vidali, 1989, p. 58) or three *šagre* (Sv. Peter, Škofije) a year, which could be explained by the loose meaning of the festivity, which extends from the celebration of the patron saint to the dedication of the church and its various parts (Hrobat Virloget, 2012, p. 14) or to several churches or chapels in the village (e.g,. Škofije). The village of Škofije remains divided in the upper (Zgornje Škofije) and lower village (Spodnje Škofije). The two settlements (or even part of the settlements) organised a *šagra* each or even more than one *šagra.* The upper village (2nd and 3rd Škofija) organized two celebrations. One was dedicated to the nearby church of Kristus Kralj (Christ the King), celebrated still today at the end of November. The local priest organizes the celebration, with the procession, accompanying the statue of Christ the King across the central part of the village.[5] The other was organised in summer months (the second Sunday of July) and was not based upon any religious celebration.

The sole organization of *šagre* in the past has already been described in detail. We will just briefly present the main characteristics. The organisation was in the hands of the young men of the village. They were in charge of the preparation of the dance floor, stage and selection of musicians, permissions, wine sale, ticket sale, the organization of the dance, where a spe-

[3] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

[4] This is understandable in the present way of living. People are usually at to work during the week, which is mostly situated in the nearby urban centres. The weekend represents 'the free days,' so the festivity has adjusted to present needs.

[5] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019 and Župnija Koper (B. d.).

cial symbolic function was linked to the so-called 'first dance' etc. (Hrobat Virloget, 2012, pp. 15–18; Ciglič, 1981; Kuret, 1998, p. 153; Koštiál, 2005, p. 209). An informant had a humorous comment on the 'old' way of advertisement: 'one week before "šagra" the Yugoslavian flag was put on the highest point. It was an old oak tree above Truške by us . . . Facebook on the tree augh.'

People managed to adjust to various changes. As seen in this case, it regarded a specific political situation. Since Istrians experienced five different change of states (from Austro-Hungarian empire, the Kingdom of Italy, Provisional Government of the Free Territory of Trieste (Zone A and B), Yugoslavia, tp Slovenia/Croatia) during the 20th century, the choice of the flag depended upon the temporary state powers. An informant commented on the period following WWII, when the territory has been divided into two zones (Zone A and B of the Free Territory of Trieste (1947–1954)). Since Škofije was a village closer to the border (Cunja, 2004), the inhabitants had to adjust to this situation. As explained by an interlocutor from Škofije: 'after the war, arches were placed . . . in Spodnje Škofije . . . a magnificent arch made of juniper . . . on the Italian side . . . on the Yugoslavian side, a knife was in our flags . . . but the arch on the Zgornje Škofije was not that magnificent.'[6]

On the day of *šagra,* all the village was decorated, houses' interior was repainted, in some towns (e.g., Piran) handmade fabrics and ivy decorations in the streets were made, etc. (Hrobat Virloget, 2012, pp. 16–18). In contrast to the night music of today, this was organised during the daylight, after lunch, with a Roman Catholic mass before.

One element of continuity from the past is the organisation of the *šagre,* especially in places where the young people are in charge of them. Still, most of the observed *šagre* tend to imitate the past events with the local popular music, mostly limited to the taste of older generations. However, in some observed study-cases of the *šagre,* young people were in charge of their organisation. As an informant noted, not only folk music should be present at these events, since the music should suit to the tastes of all generations: 'it does not matter what music is played . . . but it should be a little bit of all . . . not only rock.'[7]

The cases of *šagre* with music answering to the needs of the younger generation seem to be successful, especially those with the music that does not derive from the popular kind. Such is the case of *črna šagra* or black *šagra* in Pobegi with the concerts of metal music. The event was organized a day before the 'traditional' *šagra* with the aim of linking the so-called 'black' one and the traditional 'coloured' one. After two years the 'black' *šagra* surpassed the number of the visitors of the traditional *šagra,* which could indicate a success when tradition is adapted to the needs of the present or to those who will become the future bearers of tradition – young people. Similar was the event entitled 'the youth in Smokvica' with electronic music, which was consciously organised apart from the date of traditional *šagra,* but it was still perceived by people as *šagra.* In both cases, the events organized by village youth were supported by older village people, who expressed their satisfaction because 'something is happening in the village.'[8] As already said, if tradition does not adapt to the needs of the present, if it loses its meaning and disappears. This will probably not be the case of the *šagre* of the youth, where tradition fully answers to the needs of the present and (probably) the future bearers of tradition.

The element of *šagre* that was highlighted by most of the interlocutors of the previous and contemporary research was the function of the first dance or dance in general. It is in this case that the cohesive role of tradition takes place (Fakin Bajec, 2011, pp. 287–291). Before globalisation processes, *šagre* were one of the rare occasions where young couples could meet and express their mutual affection by the official 'first dance.' One can say that this cohesive function of *šagre* has been retained only in places, where they are organised by youth, but in contrast to the past, it is no longer the prevalent function of *šagre.* The need for social encounters in fulfilled on many other occa-

[6] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

[7] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

[8] Interviews and both field research made by Jaka Godeša, 16th of August 2019 and 2nd of August 2019.

sions. As observed during the ethnographic fieldwork, it seems that today, the main social gathering at the *šagra* is meant for families, children, and neighbours that meet at the festivity. Food and beverage are, of course, offered and consumed. It is an occasion for locals to socialize. There is music, but the dancefloor is not crowded. Dancing is not the primary purpose of the *šagra* anymore.

A difference with the *šagre* in the past is also represented by the food. While in the past only wine was offered (with the exception of some *osmicas*[9]), food was offered only in the intimacy of the family and the visiting relatives. For those days 'they did their best to offer the best they had' (Hrobat Virloget, 2012, p. 20) or as another informant commented, 'something better than usually was on the table.' Ethnologists as much as our informants were well aware of the changes in the 'traditional food.' What seems as traditional today was not necessary so in the past, as an informant commented, 'once there was not this habit of the tomato in the salad. Once, it was before the war. My uncle was a carabiniere [Italian police] in Italy and he used to eat this kind of tomato.'[10]

As seen in this case, the food has many symbolic functions in the cultures in which it is created. In line with the changing cultural patterns (through space and time), the eating habits of the members of a particular culture or community also change. The food and the ways of its preparation are not a static, unchangeable phenomenon, as they adapt to different influences, acquiring new characteristics over time (Kavrečič, 2014, p. 37). What seems today 'newly imported,' will be probably tradition in the future as most of the cultural processes have been 'invented' or 'reinvented;' therefore there is no need to, distinguish between more and less ancient tradition (Mugnaini, 2004, p. 57; Hobsbawn & Ranger, 1983). That is why, regardless of the guidelines for the so-called 'authenticity' (Sedmak, 2012) and regardless of the average perception of 'traditionality,' *čevapčiči* is one of the most common food on *šagre,* as it has been most common on the public and private gatherings in (post)socialist Yugoslavia (Habinc, 2014, p. 121). Its seems that there is no Slovene family picnic or birthday celebration during warmer months without *čevapčiči.* This has also been successfully targeted by advertising of food-chain companies. Every end of April (towards the 1st May Holidays) as well as in summer months, the companies compete with one another for 'the best' offers of *čevapčiči* and similar food. The fact that before such holidays food and butcher shops usually run out of such products shows that this dish has been commonly accepted by Slovenes. However, knowing that tradition is changeable, invented, revived, forgotten in the constant adaptation to contemporary needs of the present, it would be nonsense to judge the 'import' of new food or drinks as some sort of 'terrible contamination.' *Čevapčiči* can be compared to discourses about *burek,* a similar 'imported' food from the Balkans, in which Jernej Mlekuž finds the representations of *the Otherness, Balkanness, orientalness,* although at the same time is perceived as 'foreign, but still "ours"' (Mlekuž, 2008; Janović, 2008). Although, *čevapčiči* seem to have accomplished a more efficient integration in the Slovene society and daily dish. When talking to the interlocutors, they made it clear that 'of course, we serve čevapčiči at šagra ... what else?'[11] *Čevapčiči* are considered to be an integral part of the offering at this festivities.

Nowadays *šagra* food represents an important component of the festivity. It is important that the dish is prepared quickly and in abundance. *Čevapčiči* seems to have gained more success integrating into Slovene food habits than *burek* has, probably also because its easier preparation. Nowadays *čevapčiči* are not made at home but already prepared to be grilled, which provides them an advantage compared to other dishes.

However, in the observation of the traditional festivities in Istria we are again faced with an eternal dilemma in ethnology and cultural anthropology: to

[9] *Osmica* represents the right to sell home made products as wine, later also food for a limited number of days (initially for eight days – that is why the name *osmica* – *osem* means eight in Slovene language). This right was obtained for the peasants during the Habsburg period (Hrobat Virloget, Kastelic and Kavrečič, 2012, pp. 65–66).

[10] Interview by Katja Hrobat Virloget, 4th July 2019.

[11] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

act in an applicative way, to judge (as expected from an ethnologist) what is truly traditional (cf. Poljak Istenič, 2008, 75; Habinc, 2014, p. 114), thereby creating or inventing heritage, or to critically observe from a distance how the society today 'thinks' heritage (Fakin Bajec, 2011, p. 13). At the festival of wine called Fontana fest in Marezige,[12] it can be difficult to avoid judging as *kitsch* the presentations of the 'old days' such as the classic cars and old imported American bus or even the so-called traditional 'Šavrinke and Šavrini,' dressed in folk costume from last century, a typical form of folklorisms condemned as a 'distortion of folklore or "fakelore"' (Poljak Istenič, 2012, 84).

However, as the critics of the concept of folklorism have shown all the cultural forms, including the 'authentic' ones, remain 'constructions' (Bausinger, 2004, pp. 145–159; Mugnaini, 2004, p. 41). Furthermore, the concepts of 'authentic' and 'non-authentic' are reversed over time (Dei, 2002, p. 32). The term 'authenticity' today remains limited only to the field of tourism, where it implicates traditional culture, the feeling of originality, reality or uniqueness and where it gives sense to the experiences of tourists since tourist places are perceived as constructed, as a staged scene, with a 'staged authenticity' (Poljak Istenič, 2013, pp. 103–108). Ahmed Scounti defines these kinds of heritage performances as 'authentic illusions,' which are similar to 'the inventions of traditions' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). As intangible heritage has no authenticity, if this is conceived as rootedness, faithfulness or fixedness, since it changes, it is fluid, it is never performed identically, it is re-created, it has different application within communities, it has different meanings for different people, etc. If we want to fix it or materialize it, we just make a certain copy in a certain time, but we cannot guess the forms it will take through time (Scounti, 2009, p. 78). With tradition, 'communities and individuals think of their past, present and future' (Slavec Gradnišnik, in print). Tradition is not what people passively accept from the past and what it has always been, but is the viewpoint, the perception of the contemporary people of what the past was. It is, therefore, an interpretation of the past according to the strictly contemporary criteria. As Gérard Lenclud summarises, 'tradition is not what it always was, but what is made of it' (Lenclud, 2004, p. 131). According to Herman Bausinger, the so-called 'non-authentic' has to enter into the research field of the ethnologist to help him/her understand the processes of constructing the social meaning of the phenomenon and its role in organising social bonds (Bausinger, 2004, pp. 145–159; Mugnaini, 2004, p. 41). If we reflect on the popular regional symbol of 'Šavrini' presented in Marezige's festival, it has to be understood as a form of an invented identity from the 1990s, the consequence of the Slovenisation and nationalisation of the newly Slovenian Istria (Brumen, 2000, p. 404; Baskar, 2002, p. 120). Today, it reflects the 'façade of the tourist image' (Ledinek Lozej & Rogelja, 2012, p. 544) and 'a nostalgic search for lost time and authentic life' (Ledinek Lozej & Rogelja, 2012, p. 544). As Mateja Habinc observes, cases such as this show that authenticity is not only a fiction, as described above, but it is also a reality based on the organizers' discourse, a social fact affecting social practice, which is therefore changeable through time (Habinc, 2014, p. 115; Ceribašić, 2008, pp. 261–262).

Problems of Dis-Continuity?

If we have shown some elements of continuity through time in the village festivities of *šagre* while being well aware that continuity does not mean sameness, but adaptation and changeability through time, the question goes to a thus far mostly ignored question of the continuity of the tradition in Istria in places, where 'old people' have gone away. When we asked our interlocutors why the traditional village festivities like *šagre* have died out, usually the answer would be as the one from Manžan:[13]

> I1: These people from this village went to Izola, Koper, Trieste, Italy, they went left and right, and the village remained empty. [...] You know what they got, that Italians from Koper and Izola, they went to Trieste, and these [e.g., people settling in the emptied towns after Italians

[12] Fieldwork done by Jaka Godeša 9th June 2019.

[13] Interview by Katja Hrobat Virloget, 4 th July 2019.

> left] they got these old big houses, the old ones, they got farms in Koper, they left this and went from Marezige, Manžan, all these villages. They got and went away [...] And at that time the village, at least Manžan, has emptied out.
> K: And who came here?
> I2: People from the south [e. g. From ex Yugoslavian republics other than Slovenia] ... a feeling of loneliness among the newcomers in the village was felt further on.

The older married couple from Manžan commented that all these *forešti,* meaning strangers, not locals, are not interested in the local tradition:[14]

> I1: Once our daughter, they thought of organizing a šagra. [...] But what if here is everything mixed [meaning locals and migrants]. But then nothing happened. [...] Nothing was done.
> I2: There was no interest.
> I1: These forešti [foreigners]. There was no interest.

Similar was the answer of another informant from Zabavlje[15] on the question why the commemorations by the local monument of the national liberation struggle are no longer organised anymore: 'Today, there are other people in the village, only a few locals, they came from elsewhere. They are all fine, they have adapted, but they still do not feel the same as I do living here.'[16] Kennell, Šuligoj, and Lesjak (2018) claim that these highly significant occasions for local communities might not be understood by visitors, which can be evidently applied also to immigrants.

From these interviews, two problems can be discerned. The first is the break in the continuity of village traditions due to migrations, with the consequence of the disappearance of the 'traditional' demographic village structure. This problem has been mostly ignored until now. The prevalent perception of the hinterland of the Istrian towns was usually linked to the continuity of the inhabitants in contrast to the demographic structure of the urban population of the Istrian towns, which was more widely known, at least in Istria, to have changed after WWII. According to the data of Slovenian authorities with the so-called 'Istrian exodus'[17] 27,810 people left the areas of Istria that came under Slovenian jurisdiction between 1945 and 1958; they were mostly Italians, but also Slovenians and Croats (Cunja, 2004, p. 89; Troha, 1997, p. 59) (from a total of between 200,000 and 350,000 migrants from the whole Istria; Ballinger, 2003, pp. 1, 275). Especially the villages closer to the Italian border were faced with mass migration:

> Almost everybody left ... only ten families remained ... my wife also wanted us to leave and I already sold all my belongings ... but then I looked at the other side ... people [that moved to the emigrant's camps nearby, in Milje] lived in poor conditions ... I couldn't leave my home ... so I have stayed and bought everything back [furniture, livestock ...].

Some of the observed cases show even some revitalisation processes of *šagre* after the tradition disappeared for some decades due to the lack of interest of the young generation and the migration processes. Such is the case of the revival of the July *šagra* in 2nd and 3rd Škofija (Zgornje Škofije) in 2004. The locals (not only the younger) gathered and until 2011 organized the *šagra* that had disappeared during the 1950s, since most of the 'old' villagers left for Italy: 'it was very nice ... a lot of people came ... but then we stopped ... there is no people who would work [take care of the organization] ... young people were not interested ...

[14] Interview by Katja Hrobat Virloget, 4 th July 2019.
[15] Interview by Jaka Godeša, 28 of July 2019.
[16] Interview by Jaka Godeša, 28th July 2019.

[17] The Istrian exodus was the final stage of Italian migration from Yugoslavia, which started shortly after the war ended, when the Yugoslav national liberation army occupied the territories along the Adriatic coast (Istria, Dalmatia), assigned to the Kingdom of Italy after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire (Treaty of Rapallo 1920). Some more research has been done on the Istrian exodus, but in a much smaller scale on the migration processes after 'exodus' (Gombač, 2005; Ballinger, 2003; Verginella, 2015; Hrobat Virloget, Gousseff & Corni 2015; Kalc, 2019; Titl, 1961, etc.).

we [the elders] had to prepare and clean everything.'[18]

Besides the lack of interest of the young people in the organisation of the *šagra,* the problems of mass migrations after WWII and successive immigrations were exposed: 'here there is a lot of immigrants ... there is a few families left ... most of them went to Italy or already died ... the problem is also politics ... different political opinions and people do not want to collaborate ... this is not good ... it should be neutral.'[19]

In 1960, a few years after the final phase of the exodus, the proportion of native residents in the Slovenian part of Istria dropped to 49%, according to registry offices, reaching 65% in rural areas and 33% in urban areas. The difference is accounted for by the fact that the Italian population was concentrated in urban areas, while the adjacent rural population was largely Slovene (Titl, 1961; Kalc, 2019).[20] The Yugoslav authorities filled the void that remained in the urban areas after the Italians had left by stimulating the inflow of people from inland Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia, which has completely changed the ethnic, social, and cultural face of Istria (Gombač, 2005, p. 11).[21] The interviews show that not only inhabitants of the urban areas left, but also those from the rural, while the emptied places in the towns were settled by the Istrians from their rural surrounding (Hrobat Virloget, 2019). The process of emigration was, as it always is, highly complex, manifesting as a consequence of political, economic and social causes.

In order to minimise or relativize the effects of the 'Istrian exodus' historical discourses have emphasised the urban character of the Italians against the rural Slavic population, which was a nationalistic construct of the 19th century. New research has deconstructed this ethnic/nationalistic dichotomy, showing a much more complex socio-historical situation (Dota, 2010, p. 63; d'Alessio, 2003; on problematic national identity in Istria see Pupo & Panjek, 2004, p. 352; Ballinger, 2006; Brumen, 2000; 2001; D'Alessio, 2006; Hrobat Virloget, 2015, pp. 162–164). However, coming back to the observed problem of discontinuity, the most recent research on the migration processes after 'exodus' in Istria has showed, that in the first wave of the 'exodus,' the emptied Istrian towns after 'exodus' were settled by people from the neighbouring environment, from Istria and the wider region of Primorska (Hrobat Virloget, 2019; Kalc, 2019). The current research focusing on tradition proves again, that tradition cannot be researched apart from its social and historical context. The old cultural-historical perspective in ethnology and cultural anthropology has been replaced by perspectives focusing on agency, in from which the attention goes to dynamic processes of creations, implementation, agency, praxis, etc. (Habinc, 2008, p. 322). From this perspective, the present research indicated that one of the most decisive factors in the questions of dis-continuity or disappearance of traditions in the Istrian hinterland was played by (massive) migrations, which were until now totally overlooked, at least when speaking of the non-urban environment.

The second reason for the dying of tradition in the Istrian country-side linked to the migrations and indicated by the interlocutors is the absence of the identification of the settlers with the new environment. The new paradigm emphasis the cohesive role of tradition in which it is perceived as a medium that enhances the sense of belonging and mobilises the individual within it (Poljak Istenič, 2012, p. 88; Fakin Bajec, 2011, pp. 287–291). Jasna Fakin Bajec noted that people do not preserve tradition because they would like to preserve the past (as the expectation of the professionals would be), for market purpose (tourism) or for identification purposes, but because of their current social needs for gathering, fun, and conversations (Fakin Bajec, 2011, pp. 287–291). If people do not need to identify with the village community and gather with the members of it, especially in the contemporary individually oriented society, there is no need for tradition. The

[18] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

[19] Interview by Petra Kavrečič, 22th August 2019.

[20] In Istrian towns the total registered population of ethnic Italians dropped from 90% before the war to a mere 7.7% in Koper/Capodistria, 8.15% in Izola/Isola, and 15.7% in Piran/Pirano in 1957 (Troha, 1997, p. 59).

[21] We are well aware that other more or less massive migrations have affected this contested border region from 19th century onwards due to several changes of political powers, ideologies and sovereignties, but since our research is limited to the recent traditions, our focus goes to the correlated period.

fieldwork has shown that the problem of discontinuity of tradition in some Istrian villages is linked to the disinterest of the new settlers in actively taking part in the village traditions, and in actively taking part of the village community. This can also be explained by the individualistic and frenetic way of life of today.

A Remark on *Šagre* and Tourism

Tourism is an activity that provides substantial financial income, and it is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world (Kavrečič, 2017, p. 19). It has excellent capabilities to adjust to latest trends and needs. If is the sun and the sea, it will promote sun and swimming localities; if it is curiosity for heritage and way of living of the visited destinations, its offering and supply will adjust to that demand. In recent years, a great effort has been made towards heritage tourism, emphasising the natural and cultural resources[22] of the visited areas. In the case of North Istria, we were also interested in peoples' perception of touristic activities linked to the intangible heritage such as *šagre*. Our research has shown that *šagra* events do not have a tourist affiliation. Locals mostly want to maintain a local characteristic, and their purpose is to gather the inhabitants of the village (and surrounding communities). They are an opportunity for locals to meet and socialize. As an informant said: 'for the rural area ... šagra ... and I like it to stay this way, since the city is something different. Here are more local people [that come at šagra], although people are also coming from other places, because they have means of transport.'[23] However, tourists are not seen as participants at such events.

In contrast, there are events – mostly new – that have overcome the local affiliations and gained a more 'touristic' character. Such events (as Praznik refoška or Fontana fest in Marezige) are seen differently by the locals:[24]

> when you visited šagra you met a lot of people, it took place in the local area, but today Praznik refoška is losing its cosiness. At the beginning, the locals voluntarily organized the event, my mum, I know, she baked bread ... every woman baked something ... but today, it is only commercial, they sell different things, busses [are arriving], the restaurant ... it is all for money.

We can see the difference between the festivities. On one side there are the ones (*šagra*) that have a more local character and have no interest in tourist promotion, on the other, there are 'massive' events that are in fact trying to attract also tourists by selling products, presentation of 'old days' customs, dresses etc. that represent a 'staged authenticity.' Both types can be linked with some kind of nostalgia and especially the least ones with (trendy) special interest tourism (Šuligoj, 2018).

Concluding Remarks

This paper presents an analysis of the conducted study and ethnographic fieldwork on intangible heritage of North Istria that took place in the frame of the project Turizmo Ištriano (Programme LAS Istre). The main focus of the research was on traditional festivities, especially *šagre* in the region, which when speaking of the traditional village festivities, were the most mentioned by our interlocutors. The issues raised have brought out questions of the so-called 'authenticity' and continuity or discontinuity of the intangible heritage in North Istria, which had not been questioned before.

The question – Why have certain traditional festivities in North Istria have disappeared and why others have persisted? – can be only partially answered. The research has shown that a significate element of the break of tradition of *šagre* can be found in the massive migrations after WWII in the rural part of Istria, which is related to the consequences of the so-called 'Istrian exodus.' The finding is quite innovative, since in the dominant discourses the massive migrations were mostly linked to urban areas, to Istrian towns, but no reflection had previously been done on their impact in the rural part of Istria. The second reason

[22] Heritage tourism aims at promoting 'traveling to experience the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources' (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2015; Gibson, 2015).

[23] Interview by Jaka Godeša, 28th July 2019.

[24] Interview by Jaka Godeša, 28th July 2019.

for the discontinuity of tradition in some Istrian villages is linked to the disinterest of the new settlers in actively taking part in the village traditions,and in actively being apart of the village community. Younger people do not integrate into the villages, since they commute to work to the urban areas, and the village is mostly considered a place to sleep. In this period of capitalistic euphoria and the consumer society, nothing is done for free. Thus, migrations could be seen as one of the strong reason for the break in the traditions in Istria, in one way due to the disappearance of the 'bearers' of tradition with the 'exodus,' and on the other way due to the disinterest in the maintenance of traditions of the new settlers, coming after 'exodus' or in more recent decades.

The research has also shown cases of continuity of *šagre,* which seems to be much stronger when the active part of its organisation is taken charge by young people, the future bearers of tradition. It has been shown how necessary the tradition's adaptation to the contemporary needs of the present is in order for it to survive; in the observed cases, this has affected the choice of music for the taste of the youth (or all generations together) or with the adaptation to the popular, even though 'non-authentic' food.

In conclusion, a short reflection has been done on the problem of the correlation between traditional local festivities and the tourism industry. Which events are potentially attractive for tourists and which are eager to obtain a more local characteristic, but this time with the focus on the perspective of the locals – the Istrians? It has been shown that people do differentiate between two types of festivities, those (*šagra*) that have a more local character and in reality do not have any interest in being part of tourist promotion, on the other, the 'massive' events, that are in fact trying to attract also tourists by selling products, presentation of 'old days' customs, costumes, etc., that represent a 'staged authenticity.' From the point of view of the locals, dissatisfaction with the 'massive' festivities for tourist aims was noted, while a desire was observed to maintain the local characteristics of *šagre* gathering only the inhabitants of the village and surrounding communities. As it seems tradition has been still valued due to its function of cohesive role among people of the village and region, regardless of its (dis)continuity, 'old' or 'new' imported forms.

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Original Scientific Article

Dark Events of the Istrian Countryside: An Electronic Media Perspective

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This pilot research illuminates the connection and reflection of past traumatic events in contemporary dark events. The purpose of the research is to provide a basic understanding of what dark events and dark tourism mean in a specific regional environment – the countryside of the trans-border region of Istria. Consequently, the media-constructed social reality related to dark events was identified with the help of a quantitative content analysis; cross tabulation and descriptive analyses were employed to resolve three research questions. It was found that WWII-related memorial services dominate in all areas of the Istrian countryside; dark events, according to media, mostly occurred at memorials or internment sites; most of them were in small Istrian towns. Flower ceremonies and cultural programmes are essential elements of Istrian dark events in all areas. However, there is no statistically significant association between event type and different rural areas. Consequently, we are now (at least basically) familiar with current Istrian dark events, which offer an ideal basis for the development of dark tourism in the most developed tourist region of Slovenia and Croatia.

Keywords: dark events, dark tourism, thematic tourism, Istrian history, countryside, media
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Introduction

Contemporary tourists seek tailored tourist experiences with different immaterial qualities as a reaction to post-modern urban life (Robinson & Novelli, 2005; Šuligoj, 2018, p. 19; Trauer, 2006; Wong & Cheung, 1999). Consumers as tourists can thus encounter differentiated thematic tourism products as a reaction to tourist demand or as products which, in contrast, create demand (Douglas, Douglas, & Derrett, 2001; Kruja & Gjyrezi, 2011; Štetić, Šimičević, & Ćurčić, 2013; Trauer, 2006) and, consequently, 365-day tourism destinations.

It is worth mentioning that many terms are used in thematic tourism theory: 'niche tourism' (Robinson & Novelli, 2005), 'selective forms of tourism' (Štetić et al., 2013) or 'special interest tourism' (Douglas et al., 2001). 'Special interest tourism,' as the predecessor of 'niche tourism,' which was conceptualised during the 1980s (Hall & Weiler, 1992) and is the complete opposite of mass tourism (Douglas et al., 2001, p. 2; Hall & Weiler, 1992) accelerated in the second half of the 20th century. It as part of the interdisciplinary system of the 21st century, which encompasses all elements of supply and demand in the broadest sense, including 'political, economical, ecological, technological, and socio-economical and socio-cultural concerns, from the local to the global level' (Trauer, 2006, p. 185).

Consequently, 'special interest tourism' can be related to the so-called *homo turisticus,* who is seeking experiential dimensions based on numerous possibilities of tourist services (Šuran, 2016, p. 69) and is aimed at increasing consumption. Tourists, among other things, also look for interesting/exciting memorial sites with an (extreme) traumatic background that shapes contemporary societies only in a certain geographical area or wider on the international level, e.g., sites related to the Holocaust or other genocides and criminal acts. Interestingly, tourists, however, do not necessarily understand such sites or events (Kennell, Šuligoj, & Lesjak, 2018, p. 948). This is even more important if we consider the fact that visiting such sites is not necessarily understood, even among local residents as part of tourism, which Šuligoj (2016; 2017) found in his investigation among young residents in Croatia. However, many dark events and dark tourism sites were and still are interesting for the media. The media construct social reality through the explanation and interpretation of information (Nišić & Plavšić, 2014). Moreover, the media can generate a culturally distributed collective memory (Pavlaković & Perak, 2017, p. 301), and be the 'site of memory' (Mustapić & Balabanić, 2018, p. 439), 'the media plays a huge role when it comes to dark tourism as it contributes to the popularization of sites;' 'this could result in overcommercialisation of dark tourism sites and these sites becoming a spectacle' (Simone-Charteris, Kirkpatrick, & McLaughlin, 2018, p. 73).

This pilot research illuminates the connection and reflection of past traumatic events in contemporary memorial practices with some perceived tourist characteristics (or at least potentials for tourism development). The research aims to add a new dimension to social studies and humanities in providing a pilot analysis of history-centric memorial practices and dark tourism. More specifically, the purpose of the research is to provide a basic understanding of what dark events and dark tourism mean in a specific regional environment: the countryside of the trans-border region of Istria (Slovenian and Croatian part). A dark event, as a construct used in this research, concurrently reflects the memorial and dark tourism dimension and derives from the dark event typology of Frost and Laing (2013, pp. 36–42) and Kennell et al. (2018, p. 948).

According to the research purposes and after the finished state-of-the-art (see chapters 'Brief Theoretical Background: Dark Events and Dark Tourism' and 'Brief Historical Background: Traumatic 20th Century in Istria'), we want to identify the media-constructed social reality related to dark events as a significant part of contemporary social life (which includes tourism) in Istria. In addition, the second objective is to identify contemporary types, time components, and locations where public history-centric dark (memorial) events take place in the Istrian countryside. Consequently, a content analysis as a useful methodological approach in social sciences, where its growing 'popularity' is evidenced in several top quality scientific publications (Neuendorf, 2017, p. xv, 4), was employed. Specifically, we refer to a quantitative content analysis, which is 'analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner' (Bryman, 2012, p. 290).

The coding unit was an article as an independent electronic media entity (e-newspaper). Each article was coded according to predetermined codes (indicators); see Tables 2 and 4. Codes represented categorical variables with no multiple responses allowed. The coding process was done entirely by one researcher. All quantitative methods (cross tabulation and descriptive analyses) were employed using SPSS Statistics 24.0.

Quantitative content analysis is most efficient when dealing with specific research questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 291; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005, pp. 43–45), which led us to formulate the following research questions:

- RQ1 *What are the main characteristics of Istrian dark events that can be defined on a media basis?*
- RQ2 *Are dark events of different types associated with areas?*
- RQ3 *When do Istrian dark events occur or when do the media reports on them?*

This research builds on some of the previous research related to Istrian/Upper Adriatic memory, e.g., Ballinger (2002), D'Alessio (2012), Hrobat Virloget (2015), Hrobat Virloget and Čebron Lipovec (2017), or past commemorative practices, e.g., Klabjan (2010) and Cattunar (2012), including those focused on the legacy of Isonzo/Soča front, e.g., Kavrečič (2017), Todero (2010) as well as to some other contemporary studies, e.g., Gosar, Koderman and Rodela (2015).

Brief Theoretical Background: Dark Events and Dark Tourism

Tragic and morbid topics, in general, constitute a relevant reason for travel, which makes this activity a tourist activity within so-called dark tourism. Tarlow (2005, p. 48) described dark tourism as 'visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives,' while Preece and Price (2005, p. 192) defined it as 'travel to sites associated with death, disaster, acts of violence, tragedy, scenes of death and crimes against humanity.' However, the first definitions of Foley and Lennon (1996, p. 198) define it as 'the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites,' or as 'the visitation to any site associated with death, disaster and tragedy in the twentieth century for remembrance, education or entertainment' (1997, p. 155), or as 'tourism associated with sites of death, disaster, and depravity' (Lennon & Foley, 1999, p. 46). Very relevant and interesting are also two of Stone's definitions: dark tourism is 'the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre' (2006, p. 146) and later 'dark tourism is concerned with encountering spaces of death or calamity that have political or historical significance, and that continue to impact upon the living' Stone (2016, p. 23). All these definitions (and some others, e.g., Ashworth, 2008, p. 234; Robb, 2009, p. 51) indicate the breadth of the research area, as well as its essence, which is human death and suffering. Foundational monograph of Lennon and Foley entitled *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (Lennon & Foley, 2000) conceptualised dark tourism as a subset of cultural tourism and shifted it conceptually from heritage tourism (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Kravanja, 2018).

The term 'dark tourism' is not the only one to define the tourism-death connection. The following terms are also related to the connection between tourism and death, which are not fully synonyms: holidays in hell (O'Rourke, 1988), thanatourism (Seaton, 1996, p. 240), morbid tourism and an attraction-focused artificial morbidity-related tourism (Blom, 2000), sombre tourism (Butcher, 2003; Hughes, 2008), fright tourism (Bristow & Newman, 2005), atrocity tourism (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005), grief tourism (Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2007), conflict heritage tourism (Mansfeld & Korman, 2015), genocide tourism (R. A. Dunkley et al., 2007), trauma tourism (Clark, 2006), war-related tourism (Bigley, Lee, Chon, & Yoon, 2010), post-war tourism (Wise, 2011), war tourism (Keyes, 2012), warfare tourism (Šuligoj, 2016; 2017), battlefield tourism (Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2011; Ryan, 2007), tourism of memory (Hertzog, 2012), or memorable tourism (Drvenkar, Banožić, & Živić, 2015; Kim, 2013), favela tourism, (Robb, 2009), atomic or nuclear tourism (Freeman, 2014; Gusterson, 2004) and dystopian dark tourism (Podoshen, Venkatesh, Wallin, Andrzejewski, & Jin, 2015). The term 'dark tourism' is the most frequently searched tourism-related keyword in the developed countries of North America, Europe, and Australia (see https://trends.google.com).

Kennell et al. (2018), in contrast, focused only on so-called dark events, which are not exclusively related to the dark tourism context. They adopted Frost and Laing's (2013, pp. 36–42) typology and listed: (a) dark exhibitions, (b) dark re-enactments, e.g., annual re-enactment of the battles, (c) national days of mourning or remembrance, (d) memorial services, opening of memorials, concerts, performances, (e) significant anniversaries, e.g., centenaries, (f) parades, marches, processions, (g) festivals. Moreover, Getz's (2008, p. 404), Frost and Laing's (2013, pp. 36–42), and Kennel et al.'s (2018, pp. 947–949) descriptions of commemorative events as one kind of cultural celebrations related to the traumatic heritage/past as well as to the typology of the related events were also relevant/interesting for this research. Such events are usually designed to remember victims and historical tragic events and are carried out close to the memorial (Rojek, 1994) or dark tourism sites; consequently, we link them directly to the dark tourism. Dark tourism sites, which are also event venues, are according to Seaton (1996) (a) sites of public executions, (b) sites of individual or mass deaths: areas of former battlefields, death camps and sites of genocide and similar, (c) memorials or internment sites, (d) sites/areas with the purpose of viewing evidence of death or symbolic representations of it and (e) places or events of re-enactments or simulation of death. However, in general, events ad these sites 'are often highly significant occasions for local communities and might not be understood by tourists' (Kennell et al., 2018, p. 948). In the Istrian case, contemporary memorial and dark tourism practices have not been investigated, and we also do not know how much they are present in the (regional) media.

Brief Historical Background: Traumatic 20th Century in Istria

After the ruin of the Venetian Republic, and finally with the Congress in Vienna (1815), the Istrian peninsula was annexed to the Habsburg Empire. In 1853, Vienna declared Pula to be the empire's principal military port, which changed the city from an unimportant and inconsequently fishing village to one of Europe's more prominent naval bases; none of the following regimes accomplished as much in developing the city (Duda, 2000; Marsetič, 2013, pp. 483, 484). All this development led to an intense militarisation as well as the systematic urban planning and economic development of Pula and the entire southern Istrian peninsula (Marsetič, 2013). In terms of culture and entertainment, Pula was also extremely advanced; see Kalčić (2016) and Duda (2000). However, Pula was differed from the rest of the region by presence of the army, cultural abundance, and economic prosperity, while the people of rural areas lived in poverty; see Knez (2010) and Marsetič (2014). The clash with the Kingdom of Italy in 1915 (WWI) halted the development of the city/region.

Shortly before the war, in the summer of 1914, a civil steamboat, *Baron Gautsch,* sank south of Rovinj after entering the minefield of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, which was intended to defend the Imperial Navy from the sea (Spirito, 2002). During the WWI, Pula was bombed 41 times by Italian military aviators (Mandić, 2006, pp. 210–212), while other areas of the peninsula were not endangered/damaged. Residents of Istria, especially in 1917, suffered from hunger, which combined with diseases and dangerous living conditions led to emigration/evacuation (Herman Kaurić, 2015, p. 14). According to the Treaty of Rapallo signed on 12 November 1920, almost all territory of the former Austrian Littoral, including Istria, was annexed to the Kingdom of Italy (Lipušček, 2012; Šuligoj, 2015a). A great socio-economic crisis in the Pula and the whole peninsula (Marsetič, 2006b; 2006a), which, together with the state fascist terror, led to an increased emigration of the Slavic population and Italian antifascists (Dukovski, 2010; Hrobat Virloget & Čebron Lipovec, 2017, p. 47; Violante, 2009, p. 98); Slavic rebels as well as native local Italians of different political ideologies were persecuted by the fascists due to their common work in an antifascist coalition movement (Ashbrook, 2006; Violante, 2009). Moreover, systematic 'ethnic refinement' of the population was upgraded by the organised immigration of the 'true Italians' from other parts of the kingdom, which additionally influenced the change in the ethnic structure in Istria.

Resistance from the beginning of World War Two onwards was escalated and transformed into a severe armed conflict with the fascist Italian army. After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, Istria became part of a German Province under the name of the Operational Zone of the Adriatic Littoral (Ferenc, 1966). The tragedy of the occupation was also marked by the deportation of more than 20,000 Istrians to the Nazi-fascist concentration camps, from which more than 5,000 never returned; 5,000 Istrian Partisan fighters did not survive WWII (Jokić & Čudov, 1986, p. 417). The liberation of the Istrian peninsula was a military action of the anti-fascist resistance movement led by the Yugoslav Partisans (see Beltram, 2017, and Dukovski, 2001; 2011), which Istrians of Italian origin also were involved.

After WWII, pro-Italian forces launched a campaign to blame Tito and his followers for the violence and encouraged the Istrian Italians (both native to the area and those that had immigrated) towards emigration (Altin & Badurina, 2017; Dukovski, 2010; Kosmač, 2018). Mass executions of (former) fascists and their followers, capitalists, possessors, and Roman Catholic priests by Tito's army, mostly known as *foibe* (Altin & Badurina, 2017; D'Alessio, 2012; Radošević, 2010) (from the Italian word *infoibare* means throwing into the abyss) caused additional upheaval.[1] The victims

[1] Chasms and *foibe* are characteristic for the all Upper Adriatic karst landscape.

of the *foibe* and the socialist revolution were systematically denied up to the democratic changes of the 1990s.

On the international level, there were considerable disagreements in determining the Italian-Yugoslav state border (Kosmač, 2018). With the Paris Peace Treaties signed in 1947, Italy had to cede most of the Istrian peninsula to Yugoslavia; north of the River Mirna, including the province of Trieste, became the so-called Free Territory of Trieste (Dukovski, 2010; Kosmač, 2018; Rogoznica, 2011; Tunjić, 2004; Violante, 2009). The border issue with Italy was resolved no earlier than in 1954 and finally confirmed with the Treaty of Osimo (1975): the whole Istrian peninsula South of Muggia (Milje), was officially annexed to Yugoslavia (Tunjić, 2004). Istria in the (Second) Yugoslavia was divided between the two (socialist) republics, Slovenia and Croatia. The new political regime and the systematic immigration of Slavic people from other Yugoslav republics, significantly influenced the socio-economic development of the region (see Purini, 2012; Hrobat Virloget; and Šarić, 2015). Istria faced an imbalanced development of coastal and some other towns/cities (tourist and industrial centres) and the rural interior of the region. This resulted in the economic stagnation and depopulation of central Istria, where agriculture prevailed.

The last military conflict in the 20th century in Europe was the Yugoslav/Balkan conflict. The Croatian homeland war in Istria was not as intense and bloody as in some other areas. The Croatian part of Istria was 'liberated' by the end of 1991 without a serious direct military clash (Majušević, 2012, p. 446). The Slovenian ten-day war did not reach the scale of the Croatian one. However, there were three brief military confrontations of the Slovenian police and Territorial defence forces with the Yugoslav People's Army in the Istrian countryside: in the hamlet of Moretini, at the (then) Bivje intersection, and at the Škofije international border-crossing. These three confrontations resulted in five wounded and three dead Yugoslav People's Army soldiers (Filipčič, 2011, pp. 22, 23).

Istria, which was the leading tourist region as early as in the period of post-WWII Yugoslavia (Blažević, 1984, p. 5), has been maintaining status and still has highly recognisable tourism products on the international level (e.g., sports events, cultural events, many secular and sacral buildings from the Venetian, Austrian and Italian periods, Tito's and other heritage on the Brijuni Islands, traditional gastronomy, the former *Parenzana* railroad track, and similar), what is, in terms of development from the 19th century onwards, described by Blažević (1984; 1987) and Šuligoj (2015b).[2] Concurrently, because of its geostrategic position, the multi-ethnical Istria was an area of constant conflict and an area with reinforced military presence. Today, in contrast, it is a recognisable Upper Adriatic area of peace, collaboration and coexistence, although, according to Cocco (2010), it remains deeply subjected to Central European, Roman and Balkan influences. It seems that the French slogan *Liberté, égalité, fraternité,* is also alive in Istria in the late 20th century and especially at the beginning of the 21st century, although not without problems. Traumatic historical events of the 20th century with frequent changes in power affected Istria's residents in urban and rural areas. Consequently, this territory evolved over years to become the South-European hotspot. This creates different public memorial practices and different memorial sites, which offer typical examples, which are nowadays linked also to dark tourism. They are scattered around Istrian (coastal) cities as well as in the countryside, which is generally less overloaded with tourism, but traumatic situations (clashes, executions, torture, etc.) were taking place there as well. This offers new development opportunities for rural tourism. In terms of dark tourism, this has not been studied.

Contemporary Dark Events in the Istrian Countryside

After WWI, WWII, and after all totalitarian regimes, the events, heroes and victims of the Yugoslav/Balkan conflict in the 1990s are commemorated in Istria. As mentioned before, Istrian memorial and dark tourism practices have not been investigated, and we also do

[2] The roots of modern development date back to the Habsburg period; more can be found in Kavrečič (2009; 2011; 2015) or Baskar (2010).

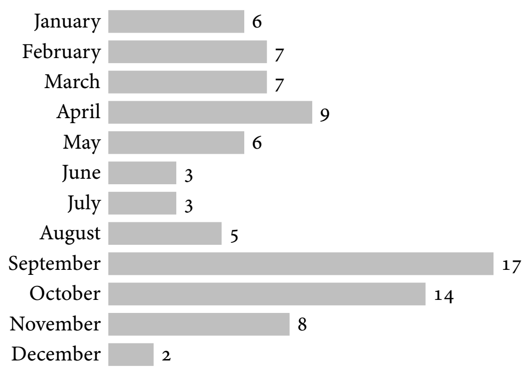

Figure 1 Dark Events Distribution by Months

Table 1 Characteristic of Analysed Articles

Category	Item	f	%
(Q1) Newspaper	Glas Istre	82	65
	La voce del popolo	30	24
	Primorske novice	14	11
(Q5) Report type	Short message	30	24
	A shortened version of the printed report	5	4
	Full text	91	72
(Q6) Number of photos	No photos	4	3
	One photo	92	73
	More than one photos	30	24
(Q7) What kind of photos?	Only old/historical	3	2
	Only new photos	118	94
	Both new and historical	1	1

not know how much they are present in the (regional) media. Thus, three leading regional newspapers were selected: *Primorske novice* in Slovenian, *Glas Istre* in Croatian, and *La voce del popolo* in the Italian language (all available in printed and electronic versions). They were selected on the basis of preliminary short informal interviews with eleven people of different ages in Slovenian and ten in Croatian Istria.

Regional media are more familiar with the local mentalities and historical moments than others are. All available articles from 1 February 2016 to 30 November 2018 were included in the analyses, which totals 126 articles. All articles were particularly focused on history-centric dark events; commemorations of 1 November[3] or scientific events were not included. Basic characteristics of analysed articles are presented in Table 1. Figure 1 shows the time distribution of articles on dark events in the Istrian countryside. As we can see, they were unevenly dispersed throughout the year; from this point of view, they are not tourist-centric. Articles on off-summer season events (April, September, October and November) are particularly interesting.[4] This is coherent with the idea of 365-days tourism destinations, if dark events link with the dark tourism context, as well as to thematic tourism theory. This finding provides an answer to RQ3.

In the following phase, all selected articles were coded (see introductory chapter) and then analysed. Table 2, which is result of cross-tabulation (χ^2 Test of Independence) analysis with Fisher exact test ($FI(x)$), shows that history-centric dark events (according to regional media) mainly occurred in rural areas ($\sum = 69\%$), if small old Istrian towns can also be classified as rural areas. Moreover, memorial services as an event type significantly dominate in all types of areas, for which dark exhibitions should also be mentioned as the second-largest type of event in Istrian media. Surprisingly, there are a small number of articles on events in the non-settlement area, although the main military clashes (and thus casualties) usually take place there; the already mentioned *foibe* are also located there; villages represent the second smallest group of event venues. Nevertheless, according to results in Table 3, based on media articles there is not enough evidence to suggest an association between event type and area: $FI(x) = 7.947$ and exact $p = 0.479$ (if $p \leq 0.05$ it is significant). This empirical finding gave us an answer to RQ2.

After the completion of the first analysis, a simple cross tabulation was employed for additional description of dark events in the Istrian countryside. As a result, Table 4 shows the main characteristics of dark events in the Istrian countryside. It is necessary to take

[3] Known as All Saints' Day, All Hallows' Day or the Day of the Dead.

[4] It should be noted that articles in electronic media are published on the day of event, or a day or two later.

Table 2 Articles on Type of Area in Relation to Events Type

Event type	Item	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dark exhibition	Count	4	5	3	0	12
	Percentage within event type	33	42	25	0	100
	Percentage within area	10	12	8	0	10
	Percentage of total	3	4	2	0	10
National day of Mourning or Remembrance	Count	5	5	1	0	11
	Percentage within event type	46	46	9	0	100
	Percentage within area	13	12	3	0	9
	Percentage of total	4	4	1	0	9
Memorial service	Count	27	30	32	9	98
	Percentage within event type	28	31	33	9	100
	Percentage within area	69	71	89	100	78
	Percentage of total	21	24	25	7	78
Significant anniversary	Count	3	2	0	0	5
	Percentage within event type	60	40	0	0	100
	Percentage within area	8	5	0	0	4
	Percentage of total	2	2	0	0	4
Total	Count	39	42	36	9	126
	Percentage within event type	31	33	29	7	100
	Percentage within area	100	100	100	100	100
	Percentage of total	31	33	29	7	100

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) city, (2) town, (3) village, (4) non-settlement area, (5) total.

Table 3 Statistical Significance

Item	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.604*	9	0.383	0.378
Likelihood Ratio	13.052	9	0.160	0.222
Fisher's Exact Test	7.947			0.479
Linear-by-Linear Assoc.	0.843**	1	0.359	0.389
No. of Valid Cases	126			

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) value, (2) degrees of freedom, (3) asymptotic significance (2-sided), (4) exact significance (2-sided).

into account once again that the following findings, as well as previous ones, rely on media-constructed reality in Istria.

Of the analysed regional electronic media articles, 44 report that dark events occurred at memorials or internment sites and 19 at sites of individual or mass deaths. Most of them were in towns. Events were history-centric with WWII as a background significantly dominating in all areas. It should be taken into consideration that WWII still represents the most extensive and traumatic armed conflict of the 20th century in Istria; events that relate to the victims of fascist terror could be added as well. Flower ceremonies, as a significant component of the programme, were pointed out in 54 articles, which clearly highlights their importance. Similarly, a speech, as the simplest event programme element, is reported in 43 articles, while more varied cultural programmes were found in 36 articles. They were the most frequent programme type in villages and towns where events occurred; see Table 4. These provide an answer to RQ1.

Table 4 Characteristics of Dark Events in the Istrian Countryside

Event type	Item		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Site category	Site of individual or mass deaths	Count	3	12	4	19
		Percentage	16	63	21	100
	Memorials or internment site	Count	22	18	4	44
		Percentage	50	41	9	100
	Site/area with the purpose of viewing evidence of death or symbolic representations of it	Count	3	1	0	4
		Percentage	75	25	0	100
Conflict	WWI	Count	3	4	1	8
		Percentage	38	50	12	100
	Fascist terror	Count	2	5	0	7
		Percentage	29	7	0	100
	WWII	Count	21	23	7	51
		Percentage	41	45	41	100
	Socialist revolution and Italian exodus	Count	5	1	0	6
		Percentage	83	17	0	100
	Independence war in the 1990s	Count	8	2	1	11
		Percentage	73	18	9	100
	Other	Count	3	1	0	4
		Percentage	75	25	0	100
Cultural programme	Just a speech	Count	25	14	4	43
		Percentage	58	32	9	100
	Varied cultural programme	Count	11	17	3	31
		Percentage	35	55	10	100
	Not specified*	Count	6	5	2	13
		Percentage	46	38	15	100
Flower ceremony	Yes	Count	23	24	7	54
		Percentage	43	44	13	100
	No	Count	8	3	0	11
		Percentage	73	27	0	100
	Not specified*	Count	11	9	2	22
		Percentage	50	41	9	100

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) city, (2) village, (3) non-settlement area, (4) total. * It was not clearly specified by the journalist.

Conclusion

Dark tourism studies focus on the relationships between still-living generations of visitors and sites of traumatic death. At these sites, dark events with simple or varied programmes occur today, which can be a special type of thematic tourism. Consequently, according to the purposes of this research (i.e., to provide a basic understanding of what dark events and dark tourism mean in a specific regional environment) dark tourism and the Istrian history in the 20th century were initially briefly described. On this basis, three research questions were defined. Six indicators (time distribution, event type, site category, conflict, cultural programme and flower ceremony) served as robust directions for the empirical analysis. It was determined that WWII-related memorial services are the dominating ones in all areas of Istrian countryside; dark events, according to media, mostly occurred at memorials or internment sites; most of them were in towns. Flower ceremonies and cultural programme are significant elements of Istrian dark events in all areas. However, there is no statistically significant association between event type and different rural areas, which also applies when the urban environment is considered. These results, which reflect the media-constructed social reality related to dark events, gave provide to all research questions (RQ1–RQ3).

The value of this pilot research is that different Istrian history-centric dark events reported in regional electronic media were identified and then described, which represents an original perspective in dark tourism studies (especially in the post-Yugoslav states). Consequently, we are now (at least basically) familiar with the present Istrian dark events, which offer an ideal base for the development of dark tourism in the most developed tourist region of Slovenia and Croatia.

However, this research has also certain limitations and weaknesses that need to be mentioned. First, the pilot research is done on the basis of electronic media, which include only limited indicators/characteristics, which means that this is not a comprehensive analysis. Second, dealing with categorical variables limits statistical analyses. Hence, the number of analysed research units can affect the results; furthermore, this analysis relies on the population. However, there was a possibility that some articles could be unintentionally overlooked. Nevertheless, there should not be a significant discrepancy between the real and the analysed number of articles.

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Original Scientific Article

Efficiency Analysis of Restaurants Operating in the Rural Areas: The Case of Slovenia

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The purpose of this paper is to analyse the efficiency performance of restaurants operating in the rural areas of Slovenia. The sample consisted of 52 independently run rural restaurant facilities. Data were obtained from restaurant managers and restaurant firms' financial reports. Based on a convenience sampling method, only those restaurants whose only source of operating revenues was providing food in a restaurant setting were included in the sample. In order to assess restaurants' efficiency performance, Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) was used. Financial variables were used as inputs and outputs to perform DEA. This paper contributes to the growing body of literature in the field of restaurant efficiency measurement by providing valuable insights into rural-restaurants efficiency performance. The findings of this study have several significant implications for future research and practice.

Keywords: efficiency, restaurant industry, Slovenia, SMES, DEA
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Introduction

Generally speaking, tourism is a vital economic activity and, in the previous decade, tourism achieved higher growth rates of gross domestic product in comparison to the world economy (WTTC, 2019b). In Slovenia, tourism plays a critical economic role. In 2018, tourism contributed to more than 12% of national gross domestic product and offered employment to almost 13% of all employees (WTTC, 2019a). Within the tourism industry, restaurants play an essential role. According to the official standard classification of activities in Slovenia, restaurants are a part of the category 'Food and beverage service activities,' which, together with accommodation activities, represents the main activity called 'accommodation and food service activities.' Food and beverage service activities are comprised of three subsectors (restaurants and mobile food service activities; event catering; beverage service activities) (see https://www.stat.si). The food and beverage sector is a vital part of the tourism industry, since tourists and visitors have to eat, and food is recognised as an indispensable tourism product. Approximately one-third of travel expenditure can be assigned to food consumption (Bélisle, 1983), and this figure can be even higher nowadays (Boyne, 2001).

A closer look at the Slovenian food and beverage sector reveals that in 2018, there were 6,597 business entities (5.4 % of all business entities), employing 18,622 employees (3.41% of all employees). The largest and most important part of this sub-sector is restaurants and inns, which represent 55.87% of all business entities in the food and beverage sector (see http://www.ajpes.si). Consequently, this sub-sector is the focus of our research. In the food and beverage sector, most business entities earn revenues not only from the restaurant business but also from other activities (e.g., they also offer accommodation facilities). The restaurant sector is also characterised by monopolistic competition, low barriers to enter the business, demand volatility, and high fluctuation of employees (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016). Since the focus of our analysis is the restaurant sector, only those restaurant facilities whose sole source of operating revenues presented the restaurant business were included in the study.

Rural areas are considered to be economically less developed regions (Roberts & Hall, 2001) and, according to Dashper (2014), such areas are continually struggling with a decline in traditional economic activities (such as agriculture) and population (younger population is migrating to urban areas). Tourism is often seen as a tool to revive rural areas since it offers economic and social benefits that can boost rural development (George, Mair, & Reid, 2009). Therefore, many governments see rural tourism as a remedy for rural areas and encourage its development in order to slow down or even reverse the negative trend of economic and social development (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). A significant segment of tourism is rural tourism and, according to Roberts and Hall (2001), tourism in rural areas makes up to 20% of all tourism activity and more than 20% of European tourists choose rural areas as their holiday destination (ibid). Because of the low entry barriers, restaurant activity is a vital resource in rural development. Rural restaurants are also a crucial element in promoting local food and gastronomy heritage and also represent an essential element of income source for the local community (Bessière, 1998).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development's (OECD) definition of rural areas, the entire Republic of Slovenia is classified as a rural area. In addition, this definition distinguishes between two types of rural areas: predominantly and moderately rural regions (Ministrstvo za kmetijstvo in okolje, 2013). For the purpose of our research, the definition from the *Geographical Terminological Dictionary* (*Geografski terminološki slovar,* 2013) was used, since it defines rural areas as a cultivated landscape with agriculture and forestry as predominant economic activities, and with an above-average share of the rural population. According to Sedmak, Planinc, and Planinc (2011), this definition is more convenient when defining and identifying rural areas in Slovenia.

In order to contribute to the development of rural areas, tourism companies must perform efficiently. This means that firms have to produce 'a maximum output from a given set of inputs' (Farrell, 1957, p. 254). In academic literature, efficiency analysis in the field of tourism has gained popularity in the previous century (since 1950). The majority of studies are concerned with the lodging sector (Poldrugovac, Tekavcic, & Jankovic, 2016; Barros, Dieke, & Santos, 2010; Pérez-Rodríguez & Acosta-González, 2007; Barros & Santos, 2006; Brown & Ragsdale, 2002), while the restaurant sector is somehow neglected (Planinc, Kukanja, & Planinc, 2018; Alberca & Parte, 2018; Kukanja & Planinc, 2018b; Reynolds & Biel, 2007) although it is a vital part of the tourism industry.

The main research objective of this paper was to determine the efficiency level of restaurants located in Slovenian rural areas and to provide suggestions for the decision-makers in order to improve their operational efficiency. The second research objective was to analyse if there are statistically significant correlations between restaurants' physical characteristics and operational efficiency.

Literature Review

There are numerous expressions that describe rural tourism, such as 'agritourism, farm tourism, soft tourism, alternative tourism, ecotourism,' and others (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997, p. 9). The OECD (1994) suggested that rural tourism should be located in rural areas, sustainable, connected with local inhabitants, developed on a small scale and, most importantly, it should be used in a way to conserve the rural natural and cultural environment. The term 'rural tourism' has also been adopted by the European Community to refer to all tourism activity in rural areas (Roberts & Hall, 2001).

Rural tourism offers many potentials benefits for rural areas. These benefits can be grouped into three segments: economic, social, and environmental (MacNulty, 2004). Generally speaking, jobs in the tourism sector do not require high education or advanced training and consequently, tourism can be an essential element in providing employment for local residents with lower education (Nigam & Narula, 2011). Job opportunities also arise from the fact that, especially in the restaurant industry, there are low barriers to entry into the business market (Assaf, Deery, & Jago, 2011). In addition, tourism also improves local quality of life through investments in infrastructure and is an important source of local tax revenues (Nigam & Narula, 2011). As far as environmental benefits are concerned, rural tourism plays a vital role in protecting the natural and cultural environment (MacNulty, 2004). Food expenditures are an essential part of tourists' and visitors' budgets, and this is something restaurants in rural areas should be aware of. In addition, restaurants in rural areas offer a link between local gastronomy and culture and can, therefore, be a vital promotion tool of a rural destination image (Boyne, Williams, & Hall, 2002).

Regardless of the well-acknowledged importance of rural tourism, Hall, Roberts, and Morag (2016) pointed out that rural areas, in general, will gain maximum benefit from tourism only when it is engaged as one part of actions to revive such areas. In the case of a weak economy and social degradation, tourism can additionally contribute to income inequality. Nevertheless, although rural tourism is unable to solve the problems of all rural areas, it still offers numerous possibilities for economic growth and development (Dashper, 2014).

According to Farrell (1957, p. 254), a firm is efficient, when it produces 'maximum output from a given set of inputs.' In operational efficiency measurement, we compare the observed (actual) and the optimal values of input(s) and output(s). If the optimal values are identified in terms of production possibilities, then the efficiency is defined as technical. In contrast, if the optimal values are identified thru firm's behavioural goals (in terms of cost, revenue, and profit), the efficiency is defined as economic (Fried, Knox Lovell, & Schmidt, 2008).

Traditionally, firms have used partial ratio analysis in order to estimate their operational efficiency and to perform a benchmark analysis with competitors (Riley, 1999). Despite its ability to quickly assess the firms' performance, the usage of ratios has several limitations, including the fact that it only uses two static variables.

Consequently, there was a growing need for a more thorough approach to efficiency analyses since firms use multiple inputs to produce multiple outputs simultaneously (Donthu, Hershberger, & Osmonbekov, 2005). As a result, the efficiency of frontier approaches was developed. There are two groups of frontier methods to estimate firms' operational efficiency, parametric and nonparametric frontier approaches (Bogetoft & Otto, 2011). With parametric methods (such as stochastic frontier analysis (SFA)), there is a need of a pre-specification of the functional form in the estimation of production frontier technologies (Assaf & Agbola, 2011), whilst nonparametric methods (such as DEA) are not so strict. DEA forms a production frontier of best practices and enables the calculation of efficiency scores for each observed unit (Oliveira, Pedro, & Marques, 2013). An observed unit is 100% efficient (and therefore lies on the frontier) when no output can be increased without increasing its inputs (Wöber, 2007). An efficiency score of less than 100 % indicates that the observed unit is inefficient. Efficiency measurement using frontier analysis is a quite useful and valuable tool in determining critical areas of cost control (Assaf & Matawie, 2009). The most crucial benefit of frontier analyses is that they reveal the gap between a firm's actual and optimal performance. In addition, frontier analyses are able to combine multiple inputs and outputs simultaneously. This cannot be said for the traditional methods of performance measurement (accounting-based ratios, cost, volume profit analysis, etc.), although they are still commonly used in assessing firms' operational performance.

The abovementioned advantages are the main reason for the rapid growth of academic literature on performance measurement with efficiency frontier analyses (Assaf & Josiassen, 2016). In the last decade, the use of DEA has become quite popular for assessing the relative efficiency of business entities (Martić, Novaković,

& Baggia, 2009). In addition, DEA has proved to be a reliable tool for assessing efficiency in various business fields (Emrouznejad & Yang, 2018). DEA combines multiple inputs and outputs simultaneously, and it also allows the usage of controllable (within managers' influence) and uncontrollable variables (managers have no influence on these variables). Requisite assets (goods and material used, services, labour, tangible and intangible assets) are controllable inputs, and no business entity can operate without them. Therefore, it is vital for managers to know how efficiently they are using them in achieving operational efficiency. In this view, the requisite assets represent a solid starting point for evaluating a firm's operational efficiency.

Efficiency analyses in academic literature in the field of tourism has gained popularity since the late 1980s and, according to Wöber (2007), 35 studies of tourism efficiency with DEA were published in the period from 1985–2006. Sainaghi, Philips, and Zavarrone (2017) performed a content analytical meta-approach on performance measurement in tourism. Most researchers studied the efficiency of the lodging industry, while the restaurant sector was somehow neglected (although it is a vital part of the hospitality industry). Their study included almost 1,000 scientific papers, and the efficiency measurement appeared in 170 papers with a first jump in the volume of paper in the period from 2007–2010 and a second jump in the period from 2011–2014.

In the academic literature, there is a growing body of studies related to the efficiency measurement using DEA in the restaurant industry (see also Table 1). The first study dates to 1986, when Hrusckha used the panel database on an aggregated level. He applied DEA analysis for ten restaurant groups and determined differences in efficiency among them (Hruschka, 1986). In the same year, Banker and Morey used the same method on a chain of fast-food restaurants (60 restaurants). They introduced the idea to use some uncontrollable inputs (age of the restaurant, location, etc.) when determining the efficiency scores. In their model, they modified the input constraints in a way to disallow the reduction of uncontrollable inputs. The result of their analysis suggested that different assumptions about controllable and uncontrollable inputs have a significant impact on efficiency results. When all inputs were considered to be controllable, 24 restaurants were efficient, but when some inputs were considered to be uncontrollable, 32 restaurants achieved efficiency score 1. The fixed nature of uncontrollable inputs allows the identification of opportunities for targeted savings in all controllable inputs that are used in the analysis (Banker & Morey, 1986).

Then, after almost two decades, researchers rediscovered DEA in the restaurant industry and, in the last five years, the number of studies intensified (see Table 1). Some studies have focused on the efficiency of menu items in order to improve restaurant firms' financial performance. Taylor, Reynolds, and Brown (2009) employed DEA as an analytic technique for analysing menu-item efficiency. They analysed 65 menu items in three full-service restaurants and concluded that menu items that are selected with DEA yield higher gross profit. However, their results were not validated, since the study was performed as a simulation. Fang and Hsu (2014) analysed 30 menu items in two restaurants of the same branded chain and proved that menu items selected with DEA increase the profitability of both restaurants by more than 15% compared with the traditional menu-engineering method.

Nevertheless, most studies were concerned with the operational efficiency of restaurants within the same franchise or chain. Reynolds (2004) analysed the efficiency of 38 same-brand restaurants and determined that seven restaurants achieved an efficiency score of 1 and that restaurants with the highest sales were not the most efficient. Reynolds and Thompson (2007) analysed the efficiency of a chain of 60 full-service restaurants; they determined that seven restaurants operated efficiently, and the average efficiency score for all 60 restaurants was 82%. Reynolds and Biel (2007) analysed the efficiency of a chain of 36 casual-theme restaurants where the average efficiency score was 86%, and eight restaurants achieved an efficiency score of 1. They determined that with more efficient use of inputs, the restaurants' income could be increased by 13.4%. Hadad, Friedman, and Hanani (2007) analysed data from 30 restaurants. They used various DEA models and consequently obtained two different sets of efficiency scores. According to the first scenario, seven restaurants were fully efficient; according to the second scenario, 11 restaurants achieved an efficiency score of 1. The emphasis of their research is on the comparison of different ranking methods (e.g., restaurant rankings in restaurant guides) with the results of DEA.

Giménez-García, Martínez-Parra, and Buffa (2007) performed a DEA analysis with the data of 54 Spanish fast-food restaurants. According to the analysis, due to input reallocation, sales and service quality can be increased on average by 4.20%. Roh and Choi (2010) employed DEA analysis to evaluate the efficiency of three brands within the same restaurant franchise. The sample consisted of 136 restaurants, and the efficiency was assessed based on interviews with managers. The analysis revealed that the average efficiency score is 73% and that the efficiency results of each brand differ significantly from the others. In some cases, it was determined that the restaurant size and managers' experience have a positive and statistically significant impact on efficiency scores, meaning that larger restaurants with more experienced managers achieve higher efficiency scores (Assaf et al., 2011). Kukanja and Planinc (2018a) used secondary financial data to analyse the efficiency of 142 restaurants. The average efficiency score was 85%, and 23 restaurants were fully efficient. Labour costs and depreciation proved to be the main areas for efficiency improvement.

Some researchers used panel data in determining the efficiency over a specific time period. For example, Giokas, Eriotis, and Dokas (2015) analysed the efficiency of 21 Greek restaurant companies in pre-recession and recession and recovery periods (2006–2012). The results reveal that the average efficiency scores are 0.85, 0.80, and 0.80 and that most companies had no significant change in their efficiency while three companies had a significant efficiency decrease. Mhlanga (2018) analysed the efficiency of 16 South African restaurants in a four year period (2012–2016). Four restaurants achieved an efficiency score of 1 at some point in the four-year period. Full-service restaurants have higher efficiency scores in comparison to fast food and casual restaurants.

In addition, the location and revenue per available seat have a statistically significant positive impact on restaurants' efficiency. Parte and Alberca (2019) examined the efficiency of 1,071 Spanish bar companies for the 2005–2014 period. The mean efficiency scores ranged from 0.673 in 2005 to 0.711 in 2014. Companies improved their efficiency through reducing inputs (the number of employees, labour costs and operational costs). The results also revealed the levels of employees' education and employment rate are significantly and positively correlated with efficiency. In contrast, low wages and long working hours are significantly and negatively correlated with efficiency.

Efficiency studies in the period from 1986 to 2019 are presented in Table 1. Most studies used sales revenues as an output in the analyses. However, there is much more inconsistency when it comes to the selection of inputs. Consequently, the efficiency results of the presented studies are not fully comparable. This would not be the case if there were a standardised selection of inputs and outputs, as in some other business sectors, such as banking. Assaf and Josiassen (2016) also concluded that the selection of inputs and outputs is driven mainly by data availability rather than theoretical arguments. Efficiency scores of restaurant firms from previous studies vary from 46.17% (Assaf et al., 2011) up to 86% (Reynolds & Biel, 2007). Efficiency scores vary because of differences in the variables, different characteristics of restaurant firms, and because researchers used different models of DEA. Specifically, several authors (Reynolds, 2003; Roh & Choi, 2010; Assaf et al., 2011) emphasised the importance of correlation analyses between inputs and outputs before performing DEA. Interestingly, the analysis of studies presented in Table 1 reveals that most studies do not provide any evidence of correlation analyses between inputs and outputs. The only exceptions are the studies of Reynolds and Biel (2007), Reynolds and Taylor (2011), Roh and Choi (2010), Taylor et al. (2009), and Kukanja and Planinc (2018a). In addition, researchers use different DEA models within the same research without proper theoretical justification for such action.

Therefore, we decided to use requisite assets as variables in our research, since no business entity can

Table 1 Efficiency Studies in the Restaurant Industry

Authors	Inputs	Outputs
Hruschka (1986)	No. of seats, labour costs, costs of goods sold, other operating expenses	Sales
Banker and Morey (1986)	Costs of goods sold, labour costs, age of the restaurant, advertising expenditures, location, existence of a 'drive-in' window	Sales
Reynolds (2003)	No. of labour hours	Sales
Reynolds (2004)	No. of labour hours, average salary, no. of seats, no. of competitors	Sales, tips
Reynolds and Thompson (2007)	Average salary, no. of seats	Sales, tips
Reynolds and Biel (2007)	Costs of goods sold, labour costs, employee satisfaction, no. of seats, taxes and insurance	Profit, retention equity
Hadad, Friedman and Hanani (2007)	No. of seats, no. of all employees, no. of employees in a shift, total size	Average no. of guests per day, average selling price
Giménez-García, Martínez-Parra and Buffa (2007)	No. of all employees, seats and server, no. of competitors, average spending per guest	Sales, service quality
Taylor, Reynolds, and Brown (2009)	Meal method preparation, no. of purveyors, no. of stations	Gross profit, meal popularity
Roh and Choi (2010)	Total size, hall size, kitchen size, no. of seats, no. of tables, no. of all employees, no. of kitchen and hall, monthly salary and rent, overhead expenses	Sales, net income
Assaf, Deery, and Jago (2011)	No. of seats, no. of employees, food and beverage costs	Sales from food, sales from beverages
Fang and Hsu (2014)	Labour costs, costs of goods sold, no. of purveyors	Gross profit, meal popularity
Giokas, Eriotis and Dokas (2015)	Operating expenses (without costs of goods sold), assets value	Sales
Mhlanga (2018)	No. of employees, no. of seats, labour costs, other operating expenses	Sales, no. of covers
Kukanja and Planinc (2018a)	Labour cost, depreciation, costs of goods sold, costs of services	Sales
Alberca and Parte (2018)	Labour costs, other operating expenses, assets value	Sales
Parte and Alberca (2019)	No. of employees, labour costs, other operating expenses, assets value	Sales

operate without them. It is also necessary for managers to know how efficiently they are using them in achieving operational efficiency. In this view, the requisite assets present a solid starting point for evaluating a firm's operational efficiency.

Research Methodology

In order to acquire primary data, a questionnaire was developed based on previous studies on efficiency measurement in the restaurant industry (presented in Table 1). The questionnaire consisted of two parts; the first was concerned with the socio-demographic characteristics of managers (gender, age, education, working experience), while the second dealt with the characteristics of restaurants (size, number of seats, employees, competitors, etc.). Secondary data consisted of financial data for the year 2018 (net sales revenues; acquisition cost of goods and material sold and costs of material; costs of services; labour costs; depreciation). Financial data were obtained by the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for public legal records and related services (http://www.ajpes.si). The availability of official financial data is a significant advantage of our research since we can avoid the subjective opinions of restaurant managers on financial matters.

In order to achieve the main objective of this research, data were gathered from 52 restaurant facilities, located in rural areas in three municipalities in the country with the highest number of overnight stays (Ljubljana; Piran; Bled). The OECD definition classification of Slovenian rural areas was not useful for defining the sample for our research. Therefore, we used the definition from the *Geographical Terminological Dictionary* (*Geografski terminološki slovar,* 2013), as already explained in the Introductory chapter.

Barrows, Vieira, and DiPietro (2015) recommended being cautious in identifying the competitive set for the benchmarking process. Therefore, we included restaurant facilities which are similar according to their operating variables. Restaurant facilities had to be officially classified as restaurants and inns; had to be run independently, and the restaurant activity had to be the only source of restaurants' operating revenues. Based on the convenience sampling method, we selected 250 business entities. All of them were prechecked in extensive field research. Fieldwork was conducted by ten interviewers during the summer and autumn of 2018. Only those facilities that met all the above-mentioned criteria were included in the study. According to interviewers' feedback, many managers refused to participate in our research for a variety of reasons. In the end, the final sample consisted of 52 independently-run restaurant facilities.

The demographic data of managers and physical characteristics of restaurants were analysed with the SPSS 24 software. In order to determine the efficiency levels, we conducted a DEA analysis with the software DEAP version 2.1. We opted for an input-oriented DEA model since restaurant managers have a much higher influence on the inputs than on the outputs (Mhlanga, 2018) and, in such a robust competitive environment, firms are usually input-oriented (Barros, 2005). In addition, input-oriented models are a measure of competitiveness (Oliveira et al., 2013). In the input-oriented model, we want to determine by how much the input(s) can be reduced without changing the output(s) (Coelli, Rao, O'Donnell, & Battese, 2005). We also used the constant returns to scale (CRS) option, since in the restaurant industry there is a strong monopolistic competition and all firms have the possibility of operating at an optimal and similar scale (Coelli et al., 2005). The efficiency scores were calculated based on one output (net sales revenues) and three inputs (acquisition cost of goods and material sold and costs of material, costs of services, labour costs, and depreciation). Prior to calculating the efficiency scores, it is necessary to verify that all inputs were correlated with the output. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Correlation Coefficients between Inputs and Output

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pearson Corr.	0.980**	0.831**	0.962**	0.777**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**	0.000**

Notes ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Column headings are as follows: (1) net sales revenues, (2) acquisition cost of goods and material sold and costs of material, (3) costs of services, (4) labour costs, (5) depreciation.

Results and Discussion

Firstly, we analysed the demographic data of managers and the physical characteristic of restaurant facilities. The results are presented in Table 3. The analysis of the data revealed that there were slightly more male respondents (51.9%) than females (48.1%) and the average age of the respondents was 45.15 years. Most (80.8%) respondents had a high-school education, and all the rest (19.2%) achieved a college or faculty degree.

Table 3 Socio-Demographic Data of Managers

Variable	Item	*f*	%
Gender	Female	25	48.10
	Male	27	51.90
Age	16–25	2	3.85
	26–35	8	15.38
	36–45	14	26.92
	46–55	20	38.46
	More than 55	8	15.38
Level of education	Elementary school	0	0.00
	Vocational or secondary school	42	80.80
	College/faculty degree	10	19.20
	Master's degree or PhD	0	0.00
Working experience	0–10	9	17.31
	11–20	13	25.00
	21–30	19	36.54
	31–40	9	17.31
	More than 40	2	3.85
Ownership structure	Owner and manager	43	82.70
	Manager	9	17.30

Table 4 Restaurants' Characteristics

Variable	(1)	(2)
Size of the restaurant (m^2)	248.50	102.15
Number of seats	136.08	46.13
Number of employees	6.38	4.04
Age of the restaurant	38.24	25.42
Number of competitors	1.42	1.02
Average spending per guest in EUR	13.87	5.11

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) mean, (2) standard deviation.

As far as working experience in the restaurant industry is concerned, managers had, on average, almost 23 years of working experience. The majority of respondents (82.7%) owned the restaurant facility and were also employed as managers, while the rest (17.3%) were only managers.

In the next step, we analysed the characteristics of restaurants facilities. The results are presented in Table 4. The analysis of restaurant facilities characteristic indicated that the average size of a restaurant was 248.5 square metres and the average number of seats was 136. In terms of the number of employees, more than half of all restaurants included in the sample (51.92 %) employed up to 5 employees, 32.70% employed from 6 to 10 employees, and only three restaurants (5.77%) employed more than 15 employees. On average, the restaurants had been in business for 38 years, and 78.8% of them were run as family businesses.

Table 5 Financial Data in Euros

Variable	(1)	(2)
Acquisition cost of goods and material sold and costs of material	102,866.46	67,946.77
Costs of services	26,512.27	12,974.09
Labour costs	57,267.40	37,630.60
Depreciation	6,655.67	2,930.96
Net sales revenues	213,347.77	105,756.92

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) mean, (2) standard deviation.

As suggested by Reynolds (2004), we also gathered information on the number of competitors in the vicinity of a restaurant facility. Almost half of the restaurants (46.15 %) had 0 or 1 competitors, while all the rest (53.84%) had 2 or 3 competitors within a 1 km radius. The average spending per guest (person – ASP) in all restaurants was almost 14 euros.

Next, we analysed the financial data of all 52 restaurant facilities for the year 2018. As already mentioned, the financial data form statements of income were obtained from national authorities. The results are presented in Table 5.

According to the results presented in Figure 1, only nine restaurant firms achieved a score of 1, which indicates that they are fully efficient (100%). The average value of efficiency of all 52 firms under observation is 67%. Based on research results, we can conclude that on average, the evaluated firms could reduce their inputs by 33% and simultaneously maintain the same level of total sales revenues (the output). Detailed results on efficiency scores are presented in Figure 1.

Twenty-nine restaurants achieved and efficiency

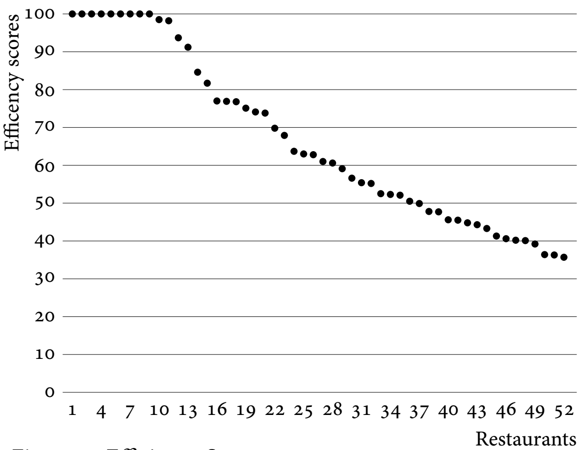

Figure 1 Efficiency Scores

score below the average efficiency score, while 23 restaurants achieved above the average efficiency. Detailed analysis of restaurants that had achieved the efficiency score below the average revealed that when it comes to the input 'costs of labour,' there is much room for optimisation. This is also true for other inputs but to a lesser extent. According to the analysis, the costs of labour could be, on average, lower by more than 60%. Although all requisite assets are controllable inputs, managers cannot lower them to the recommended extent. Because of already low salaries in the restaurant industry (see explanation below) and also due to the Slovenian tax legislation, managers cannot afford such a drastic cost reduction. The average monthly gross salary in the restaurant industry for the year 2018 in Slovenia was €1,056.22, while the average gross salary for all business subjects was €1,681.55 (see https://pxweb.stat.si). The actual net salaries in Slovenia are lower by more than 30% due to relatively high tax burdens. Consequently, restaurant managers have little or no space in terms of labour cost reductions.

Another significant issue is concerned with the lack of people willing to work in the restaurant industry. The Slovenian government addressed this issue by changing the legislation in 2005 by eliminating the condition of mandatory education for professions in the tourism and restaurant industry (waiters, cooks, receptionists, etc.) (Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o gostinstvu, 2005). The change in legislation did not bring the desired effect. According to

Table 6 Correlation Coefficients between Efficiency Scores and Restaurants' Physical Characteristics

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Pearson Corr.	−0.214	−0.252	−0.222	−0.279*
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.127	0.072	0.114	0.045

Notes * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Column headings are as follows: (1) efficiency scores, (2) restaurant size, (3) no. of seats, (4) average spending per person, (5) age of a restaurant.

Zupančič (2019), the government should take some steps in reducing the tax burden on salaries which would result in higher net salaries.

Regarding the cost of goods and material sold and costs of material, managers should consider optimising costs through inter-firm networking. According to Sedmak et al. (2011), there are still unexploited potentials in networking between firms in the Slovenian hospitality sector, as research results revealed that managers see the inter-firm networking as a possibility to gain access to more reliable and favourable suppliers.

Next, we verified whether there are correlations between efficiency scores and restaurants' physical characteristics, which would help us to better understand the efficiency level in rural restaurant facilities. We considered the size of a restaurant, the number of seats, the average spending per guest, and the age of restaurants. The results are presented in Table 6.

The results of the correlation analysis showed that only the age of restaurants has a weak negative statistically significant correlation with the efficiency scores (r = −0.279, 2-tailed Sig. = 0.045). Although the correlation coefficients do not indicate the direction of causality, we might assume that restaurants operating for a more extended period of time are becoming less efficient. One possible explanation could be that restaurants in their early life cycle stages put more effort in marketing actions in order to become recognisable than in their maturity and decline phase, which results in higher operational efficiency (on average restaurants have 38 years of business activity). Nevertheless, further research should be undertaken to investigate the influence of different life cycle stages and years of business activity on restaurants' operational efficiency.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this paper was to determine the efficiency of selected restaurants operating in rural areas. We decided to use the requisite assets as inputs since no business can operate without them. According to the analysis, the selected restaurants achieved an average efficiency score of 67%. This result is not in line in comparison with other studies of restaurant efficiency, where the identified efficiency results were higher (Banker & Morey, 1986; Choi, Roh, & Yoon, 2007; Giménez-García et al., 2007; Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds & Biel, 2007; Reynolds & Thompson, 2007; Giokas et al., 2015; Kukanja & Planinc, 2018a; Parte & Alberca, 2019). On the contrary, only in a few studies were the identified average scores below our results (Alberca & Parte, 2018; Assaf et al., 2011; Hadad et al., 2007).

The comparison of results between our study and previous studies is difficult if not impossible since different inputs and outputs had been used in different DEA studies (see also Table 1). The direct comparison is possible only with the results of Kukanja and Planinc's (2018a) study; the authors had used the same inputs and output as they were used in our study and calculated the average efficiency of 142 restaurants at 85%. In their study, restaurants were located predominantly in Slovenian urban areas, while in our case, restaurant facilities were located exclusively in rural areas. We can assume that restaurants in urban areas can generate higher revenues since urban areas offer a higher number and frequency of guests. Restaurants in urban areas are also more often characterised as more luxurious and can consequently charge higher prices for their offerings.

This research also has some other limitations that must be considered. DEA analysis is a deterministic method and, consequently, every observed unit that does not lie on the efficiency frontier is characterised as an inefficient unit (Fried, Knox Lovell, & Schmidt, 1993). The financial data used in our study presented only one business year (2018). Therefore, it would be of great interest to use the panel data. Another limitation is concerned with the sample size and geographical distribution of restaurant facilities. It would be necessary to broaden the research in order to get more conclusive results of the analysis.

Regarding the practical implications of this study, we provided some valuable information for restaurant managers and decision-makers in terms of identifying areas where further optimisations are possible and necessary in order to improve restaurant firms' efficiency. The analysis revealed that managers should primarily focus on optimising labour costs. Unfortunately, we also determined that managers have little or no space for such optimisation because of the already low salaries in the restaurant industry and because of the strict labour and tax legislation. Therefore, an essential area for restaurants' operational efficiency improvement might be inter-firm networking, especially in terms of optimising the costs of goods and material sold and costs of material.

In order to ensure comparable benchmarking analyses, we should also emphasise the importance of the usage of objective and reliable information in determining the efficiency levels. Objective and reliable data is a prerequisite for conducting effective efficiency analyses.

For an in-depth understanding of restaurants' efficiency, further research is needed. Researchers should focus on analysing management practices of the best-performing restaurants. In addition, the element of quality of input and output variables is also worth further investigation, since the use of appropriate variables is imperative in understanding the achieved efficiency levels.

Further research should consider incorporating firms' non-financial indicators into the efficiency analysis. Non-financial indicators are becoming increasingly important in evaluating the business performance and, in combination with financial indicators, represent a balanced scorecard consisting of four performance elements: financial, customer service, internal processes, and the learning and growth aspect (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The fact is that relying solely on financial analysis is not advisable since companies are often able to tailor business results in one way or another (Atkinson & Brown, 2001; Hansen, Otley, & Van der Stede, 2003). The combination of financial and non-financial indicators is imperative in today's competitive environment. Many firms already use non-financial indicators related to customer satisfaction, product quality, achieved market share, corporate social responsibility, environmental indicators (e.g., carbon footprint, green practices, etc.), firms' organisational climate, etc. (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Tarigan & Widjaja, 2012; Banker, Potter, & Srinivasan, 2005; Sainaghi et al., 2017).

Since the restaurant industry is a vital part of the tourism industry, there is a need to establish a standardised selection of inputs and outputs. Ensuring an appropriate system for standardised efficiency analyses would significantly contribute to accurate benchmarking of the restaurant industry worldwide.

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Service Quality in Restaurants Operating in a Rural Area: The Case of Slovenian Istria

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The purpose of this paper was to investigate service quality in restaurants operating in the rural area of Slovenian Istria. The DINESERV tool was used as a research instrument. The research sample consisted of 25 restaurant facilities and 250 valid questionnaires completed by domestic guests. Based on results of the exploratory factor analysis, two main factor groups that best explain domestic guests' quality perceptions in rural restaurant facilities were identified: (1) Empathy, Responsiveness, and Assurance (ERA) and (2) Tangibles. The results of our study are significantly different from those obtained in a previous study performed in the coastal area of Slovenian Istria (Kukanja & Planinc, 2015), as they indicate a relatively bipolar and homogeneous service quality structure. This study is of great managerial interest at the micro (restaurant) and macro (destination) levels. Research results indicate that restaurant managers should emphasise the importance of the two identified quality dimensions (ERA and Tangibles) and continuously measure the level of their offerings. Accordingly, research results may also be implemented in future destination quality and development strategies. In terms of future research, it would be of great interest to see if similarities in guests' quality perceptions exist between Slovenian Istria and other competitive rural destinations.

Keywords: restaurant industry, service quality, DINESERV, rural areas, Slovenian Istria
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Introduction

Understanding, achieving, and maintaining service quality are recognised as essential elements leading to the successful business of hospitality firms. Knowing guests' quality expectations is instrumental in developing a quality strategy for meeting and exceeding their expectations (Ryu & Lee, 2017). Consequently, the efforts of service managers and researchers are directed to understanding and measuring guests' quality expectations and the quality of services provided.

In Slovenian Istria, several local tourism strategies primarily focus on general guidelines on how to develop different types of tourism in different geographical areas, towns, and municipalities (see https://www.las-istre.si; Mestna občina Koper, 2016; Turistično združenje Portorož, 2019). To the best of our knowledge, there are no studies that measure guests' perceptions of restaurant service quality on an operational (micro) level in rural areas. This is important because different restaurant facilities are the primary providers of the gastronomic services in rural Istria (Kukanja, 2016). The only study that measured domestic guests' quality perceptions in the area (coastal Istria) was conducted by Kukanja and Planinc in 2015, based on which the present study examines domestic guests' quality perceptions in restaurant facilities operating in the rural part of Slovenian Istria. It does this by applying the DINESERV tool. To determine guests' level of satisfaction with the quality of restaurant offerings, in our study, the SERVPERF (performance-based) approach was implemented, as previously suggested by Adil, Ghaswyneh, and Albkour (2013), Cronin and Taylor (1994), and Unuvar and Kaya (2017).

The purpose of this investigation is to explore domestic guests' quality perceptions in restaurant facilities operating in the rural part of Slovenian Istria. Based on previous research conducted in the area and the literature review (see Chapter 2), we formulated our main research question (RQ):

RQ *How do domestic guests' perceive service quality in restaurants located in rural Istria?*

This paper is divided into several sections. First, a brief review of service quality and rural tourism research is provided. Next, the research methodology is presented; followed by a presentation and discussion of results. In conclusion, suggestions for future research and useful information for restaurant managers are provided.

Literature Review

Service Quality

In recent decades, many academics (Hanks, Line, & Kim, 2017; Kukanja, Gomezelj Omerzel, & Kodrič, 2017; Nikbin, Marimuthu, & Hyun, 2016) have examined the concept of service quality, its dimensions, and measurement methods. Among the various definitions proposed, the most widely used is the one proposed by Oliver (1980), which defines service quality as a gap between guests' quality expectations and quality perceptions (Park & Jeong, 2019). Service quality is built on the concept of guest satisfaction. Satisfaction is most often defined as a post-purchase construct that is related to how a consumer likes or dislikes a service after experiencing it (Truong & Foster, 2006). In terms of the restaurant industry, this post-purchase construct is primarily a result of pre-dining expectations and previous experiences. According to Oliver's (1980) disconfirmation theory, an individual guest's expectations are confirmed when the service performs as expected, negatively when the service performs worse than expected, and positively when the service performs as/or better than expected. Based on Oliver's theoretical concept, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) defined service quality as the ability of a service to fulfil and exceed guests' quality expectations. Because of the intangibility of services and guests' subjective perceptions of service quality, the delivery of high-quality services in the hospitality and tourism industry is a difficult task. In academic literature, several attempts have been made to capture and measure the essential components of service quality.

Parasuraman et al. (1985; 1988) developed a five-step model of service quality (also referred to as the Gap model) and proposed the SERVQUAL instrument, which measures service quality based on 22 quality indicators merged into five service quality attributes (quality dimensions): Responsiveness, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Reliability (also referred to as RATER). Similarly, Grönroos (1990) and Lehtinen and Lehtinen (1991) proposed two major components of service quality: the tangible (technical) and the intangible (functional) aspect of service quality. Following the pioneering work of Parasuraman et al. (1985) and Grönroos (1990), different scholars (Candido & Morris 2000; Kukanja et al., 2017; Lin, Chan, & Tsai, 2009) proposed alternative approaches to service quality measurement. For example, Lin et al. (2009) upgraded the traditional Importance Performance Analysis (IPA) with service quality gap evaluation and developed a new instrument called IPGA (Importance Performance Gap Analyses), Saeida Ardakani, Nejatian, Farhangnejad, and Nejati (2015) applied a fuzzy-logic method to service quality evaluation, while Kukanja et al. (2017) developed a service quality model based on the concept of Kotler's marketing mix. According to Ali, Hussain, Konar, and Jeon (2017), none of these alternative models received significant academic validation. Moreover, Ali et al. (2017) found that all alternative models were conceptually based on the gap model, as first proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985). This view was also supported by Sharif and Kassim (2012), who state that the predominant quantitative measurement technique in hospitality and tourism research remains the SERVQUAL instrument with all its modifications. To adapt the SERVQUAL instrument to the specifics of the hospitality sector, many scholars modified the original SERVQUAL instrument and developed specific tailor-made models, such as:

- LODGSERV (Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton, & Yokoyama, 1990): a modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument developed to measure service quality within the context of lodging (accommodation) settings;
- DINESERV tool (Stevens, Knutson, & Patton, 1995): a modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument, developed for service quality evaluation in different restaurant settings.
- HOLSERV (Wong Ooi Mei, Dean, & White, 1999): a service quality instrument designed for quality evaluation in hotels;
- TANGSERV (Raajpoot, 2002): developed to measure the tangible aspect of service quality;
- SERVIMPERF model (Lin et al., 2009): this instrument combines service quality evaluation with importance measurement of different quality attributes;
- GRSERV scale (Chen, Cheng, & Hsu, 2013) designed for measuring guests' perceptions of service quality in green restaurants;
- MSQ (Eid & Abdelkaber, 2017): a modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument adapted for measuring service quality in Muslim facilities;

Although restaurant managers can use simple techniques to assess guests' satisfaction (e.g., observations, conversations with employees and guests, hidden guests, etc.) service providers need standardised (quantitative) measurement tools to empirically evaluate, compare (benchmark), and understand the quality construct of provided services.

Service quality is not essential only for the success of restaurant firms, but also plays a vital role in the way tourists and/or visitors experience tourist destinations (Křižman Pavlović & Živolić, 2008). Consequently, more and more Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are focusing on gastronomic tourism as a central element of a destinations' tourism product (Sukiman, Omar, Muhibudin, Yussof, & Mohamed, 2013). Rural tourism destinations, in particular, are promoting local gastronomy (most often in the relationship between local food and tourism), as it highlights their distinctive food cultures, improves local sustainability standards, and strengths community wellbeing (Bellini & Resnick, 2018; see https://igcat.org). In Slovenia, restaurant service quality, especially in the context of rural tourism, is relatively poorly analysed. This results in a lack of academic articles, although after the release of the Strategy of Gastronomy Development of Slovenia in 2006, a slight increase of research interest for gastronomy and restaurant-quality research was observed (Gačnik, 2012; Kerma & Gačnik, 2015; Kukanja, 2016; 2017; Sanchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2015). Accordingly, there were more studies in the field of food and beverage (restaurant) management (Gričar & Bojnec, 2009; Kukanja & Planinc, 2018), farm tourism management (Bojnec & Latruffe, 2013; Potočnik Slavič, 2014), and service quality management (Kukanja & Planinc, 2015).

The DINESERV Tool

The original DINESERV tool included 40 service quality indicators. In the process of academic evaluation, the instrument was refined and revalidated. Today, the final version includes 29 items, which are captured into five RATER quality dimensions of the generic SERVQUAL instrument (Stevens et al., 1995). In their pilot study of service quality in Quick Service, Casual/Theme, and Fine Dining Restaurants, Knutson, Stevens, and Patton (1996) found that Reliability was the most important service quality dimension, followed by Tangibles, Assurance, Responsiveness, and Empathy. Later, Johns and Tyas (1996) used a modified version of the SERVQUAL instrument to evaluate the service quality of a contract catering company; interestingly, they found that other specific elements related to the quality of service staff and food, and not the RATER quality dimensions, were more important for delivering high-quality services.

Since the year 2000, there has been an increasing amount of academic research on restaurant quality management. In many studies, the DINESERV tool was used to assess the quality structure in different geographical areas. For example, Kim, McCahon, and Miller (2003) used the DINESERV tool to evaluate the service quality of a foreign-brand, casual dining restaurant in Korea. The factor analysis indicated that Tangibles had three sub-dimensions, and Responsiveness had a substantial overlap with Assurance. Results also revealed that gender, average spending per person (ASP), and the dining occasion significantly impacted guests' perceptions of service quality. Similarly, Bougoure and Neu (2010) used the DINESERV tool to assess service quality in the Malaysian fast food industry. The study confirmed the five-dimensional nature of the DINESERV tool. Later, Marković, Raspor and Šegarić (2010) analysed service quality in restaurants in Croatia, using a modified version of the DINESERV questionnaire and found that seven quality dimensions best explain guests' quality expectations in Croatian restaurants and only two dimensions influence guests' quality perceptions. Following the study of Marković et al. (2010), in 2015, Kukanja and Planinc conducted a cross-national comparison between the two neighbouring North Mediterranean tourist destinations: Opatija and Portorož and Piran. In their study, Kukanja and Planinc (2015) identified the importance of the very same quality dimensions as had previously been identified in the Opatija' study.

Similarly, Djekic et al. (2016) used the DINESERV tool to analyse restaurant guests' perceptions of service quality in different European cities: Belgrade (Serbia), Manchester (UK), Thessaloniki (Greece), and Porto (Portugal). The research results revealed that guests' from different cities showed significantly different perceptions regarding restaurant service quality. The authors also reported that the gender of guests' played a significant role in the perception of the interior, restroom, and service, while the age of respondents was a category with no significant difference concerning food quality, layout, restrooms, and service.

The results of presented studies indicate that the RATER quality dimensions are not necessarily applicable in all restaurant facilities. Research results are not generalisable as restaurant guests may have different quality expectations from different restaurant facilities in different geographic areas. Nevertheless, the presented findings may aid in better understanding the specificity of the restaurant service quality. According to Hansen (2014), DINESERV has proven to be a reliable and valid measurement tool for assessing restaurant service quality. Following previous research, the DINESERV tool is applied in our study as well.

Rural Areas and Rural Tourism

According to Loureiro (2012), rural areas in postmodern society have grown in importance and appeal, since they have been perceived as green and unspoiled places. Conceptually, rural tourism may be regarded as tourism in the countryside, a form that embraces the rural environment as pivotal to the product offered (Loureiro, 2012). Rural tourism should be functionally rural, small in scale, traditional, organically and slowly growing, and managed by locals (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008). According to Frochot (2005) and Ohe and Kurihara (2013), scholars have also become interested in rural tourism, as it was also recognised as a development tool for often economically depressed and underdeveloped rural areas. Rural tourism has also been identified as an opportunity to diversify the tourism product in terms of declining the importance of the mass sea, sand, and sun (SSS) tourism destinations (Sharpley, 2002). Since the year 2000, there has been an increasing tendency among the urban population to choose rural zones as short-term tourism destinations (Loureiro, 2012). Service providers must correspondingly adapt to the current market situation. Guests in rural areas are becoming extremely demanding, as well as price- and quality-oriented (Sharpley, 2002). This results in an extremely competitive business environment, which is also dominated by powerful communication campaigns (Roberts, Hall, & Morag, 2017) and strategically developed marketing actions (e.g., Green story of Slovenia; Discover green destinations and providers; Indulge in the most beautiful green adventures etc.) on different social media platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor, Booking.com, etc.).

Case Study Region

This research was carried out in the rural area of Slovenian Istria, more specifically, in the hinterland of the municipalities of Piran, Koper, Izola, and Ankaran. Slovenian Istria (also referred to as the Slovenian Mediterranean), and especially its seaside riviera, are one of the most recognisable tourist destinations in the Eastern Adriatic region. Based on its long tradition of organised tourism, Slovenian Istria is still considered one of the most visited tourist destinations in the Republic of Slovenia (see https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/Field/Index/24/66). In order to upgrade the market position of the entire area of Slovenian Istria, different projects and strategies have been applied by different municipalities and stakeholders, such as: the EU cross-border project '365 Days of the Riviera,' which aimed to extend the summer season, the gastro-project 'Taste of Istria,' the wellness project 'Wellness Istria,' the wine path project 'Malvasia TourIstra,' and many others (see https://www.las-istre.si; https://www.turistica.si). All projects emphasised the importance of gastronomy and rural development for the overall tourism development of the entire region (Slovenian Istria). Further development of gastronomy in rural areas is also emphasised in different local strategies (e.g., Tourism Development Strategy of the Municipality of Piran until 2025 (Turistično združenje Portorož, 2019); Strategy of Development and Marketing of the Municipality of Koper until 2025 (Mestna občina Koper, 2016); and the National Strategy for the Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism for 2017–2021 (Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, 2019). This is also important because gastronomy and rural (green) areas are important elements of Slovene national identity and critical components of its promotional campaigns at different national and international levels (Korez-Vide, 2017). Moreover, in 2018, Slovenia was officially appointed as the European (EU) Region of Gastronomy 2021 (see https://igcat.org).

Methodology

Research Process and Sample Description

In the first part of the study, qualitative research was performed to identify previous studies on restaurant quality in rural areas. Articles related to the research topic were retrieved in February 2019 from major academic databases for tourism and hospitality research, such as EBSCOhost (http://search.ebscohost.com/), Science Direct (http://sciencedirect.com/), and the Springer database (http://link.springer.com/). Keywords used to retrieve literature included: 'restaurant quality,' 'rural,' 'service quality,' 'DINESERV,' and 'service measurement.' The screening process started with reading titles and abstracts of each article. Although service quality is well researched in academic literature, surprisingly, there were relatively few studies focusing on restaurant service quality in rural areas. Articles and chapters in books that matched the topic of the research were included in the study in a logical manner (a total of nine publications). During the process of reviewing the academic literature, we also verified whether any previous studies had analysed restaurant service quality in Slovenian Istria. We found only one research study, conducted by Kukanja and Planinc in 2015. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only study that measured the quality of restaurant offerings in Slovenian Istria using the DINESERV methodology.

In the next part of the study, domestic guests' perceptions of restaurant service quality were analysed using the DINESERV tool. This instrument comprises 29 service quality indicators that correspond to the five quality dimensions of the generic SERVQUAL instrument (quality indicators are presented in Table 2). The level of guests' quality perceptions was measured on a five-point Likert-type ordinal scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Although the generic DINESERV tool measures the differences between guests' quality expectations and perceptions to determine the level of the quality gap, in our study, we focused only on the analysis of guests' quality perceptions, as suggested by Adil et al. (2013). The research process used in this study was prepared by adapting the procedure used by Kukanja and Planinc (2015), who measured guests' quality expectations and perceptions in different restaurant settings located in the Portorož and Piran coastal area. Their study included 32 restaurant settings and 156 domestic guests.

In order to facilitate the comparison of results to Kukanja and Planinc's study, our study is predicated on the following research preconditions: time of field research (month of April); guest sample (domestic guests), and restaurant sample (only the following types of foodservice facilities were included in the study: restaurants (in Slovene *restavracije*), inns (in Slovene *gostilne*), and snack facilities (in Slovene *okrepčevalnice*) (see also Table 4). To determine the geographical (rural) area in which our research was conducted, we obtained information from the local development agency LAS Istre, which is responsible for Istrian rural development (see https://www.las-istre.si), and we consulted representatives of local tourism entrepreneurs operating in the area (M. Kozlovič Hrvatin, personal communication, 11 February 2019). Unfortunately, the exact number of restaurants located in rural Istria is unknown, although according to official data (see https://www.ajpes.si), 413 companies were operating in restaurant (Food & Beverage) sector in the four Istrian municipalities (Piran, Koper, Izola, and Ankaran).

The fieldwork was performed by five pre-trained surveyors. Based on convenience sampling, questionnaires were distributed in 25 restaurants located in the Istrian hinterland. Each restaurant received ten questionnaires, which were completed by domestic guests. Residents were not included in the research. Before conducting the research, we obtained permission from the restaurant managers. Guests were asked to fill in a questionnaire after the service encounter. Although we used the performance-based scale, which (according to Adil et al. (2013)) considerably reduces the number of guests unwilling to collaborate in the study, some guests (n = 31) refused to participate for a variety of reasons. Therefore, the final analysis is based on 250 valid questionnaires. The IBM SPSS software version 25.0 was used for the analysis of the results.

First, descriptive statistics analysis was used to describe respondents' demographic characteristics and to evaluate their quality perceptions (see Table 1). Next, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed (see Tables 2 and 3) to assess the perceived quality structure. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was used to derive the underlying dimensions of service quality. Variables with eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1, factor loadings above 0.3, and factors that contain more than three quality indicators were retained. To test the reliability of the scale and the inner consistency of extracted factors, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated.

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Data

Variable	Item	*f*	%
Gender	Female	126	50.4
	Male	124	49.6
Age	16–25	77	30.8
	26–35	42	16.8
	36–45	41	16.4
	46–55	52	20.8
	More than 55	38	15.2
Level of education	Elementary school	19	7.6
	Vocational or secondary school	134	53.6
	Associate degree	19	7.6
	College or faculty degree	61	24.4
	Master's degree or PhD	17	6.8
Number of visits	Once (first-time visitor)	35	14.0
	Twice	34	13.6
	Three times or more	181	72.4
Purpose of visit	Celebration	37	14.8
	Business	19	7.6
	Get together (socialising)	78	31.2
	To dine (nutrition)	116	46.4

Research Results

In Table 1, the basic socio-demographic data are presented. As can be seen, the majority of respondents were in the 16–25 year group (the average is 38.3 years of age; standard deviation is 15.45), and the sample was almost equally composed of female (50.4%) and male (49.6%) guests. Most guests had finished vocational or secondary school. Next, the purpose of visit and the number of visits to the same restaurant were analysed. Most guests (72.4%) visited the same restaurant three or more times with the purpose of dining (46.4%).

The results presented in Table 2 show that all 29 DINESERV quality indicators were evaluated relatively highly (the average mean value is 4.31). Among the five service quality dimensions, the highest-rated dimen-

Table 2 Analysis of Guests' Quality Perceptions

Quality indicators		(1)	(2)
Tangibles	I1 Visually attractive parking areas and building exteriors	3.62	1.102
	I2 Visually attractive dining area	4.04	0.997
	I3 Clean, neat and appropriately dressed staff	4.44	0.722
	I4 Restaurant's decor typical to its image and price range	4.38	0.784
	I5 Easily readable menu	4.64	0.606
	I6 Visually attractive menu	4.41	0.724
	I7 Comfortable dining area	4.06	0.961
	I8 Clean restrooms	4.12	1.009
	I9 Clean dining areas	4.39	0.820
	I10 Comfortable seats in the dining room	3.98	0.994
Reliability	I11 Service in the promised time	4.49	0.832
	I12 Quick correction of incorrect service	4.46	0.817
	V13 Dependable and consistent restaurant	4.57	0.686
	I14 Accurate bill	4.82	0.518
	I15 Error-free served order (food)	4.66	0.647
Responsiveness	I16 Maintaining speed and quality of service during busy times	4.04	1.019
	I17 Provision of prompt service	4.36	0.849
	I18 Extra effort for handling special requests	4.39	0.877
Assurance	I19 Employees can answer questions completely	4.41	0.827
	I20 Comfortable and confident feeling	4.40	0.749
	I21 Staff provide inf. about menu items, their ingred. and methods of preparation	4.44	0.732
	I22 Feeling safe	4.38	0.778
	I23 Well-trained, competent and experienced staff	4.36	0.733
	I24 Restaurant supports the employees	4.40	0.728
Empathy	I25 Employees provide individual attention	4.06	0.903
	I26 Special feeling	4.09	1.034
	I27 Anticipation of guests' individual needs and wants	4.03	0.993
	I28 Sympathetic and reassuring employees	4.26	0.846
	I29 Guests' best interests at heart	4.41	0.856

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) mean, (2) standard deviation.

sion was Reliability (mean 4.6), with I14, with 'the accurate guest bill' as its highest-rated indicator (mean value 4.82). The results indicate that the lowest perceptions are related to the dimension of Empathy (mean 4.17), with the lowest scores related to the indicator I27 – 'Anticipation of guests' individual needs and wants' (mean 4.03). Standard deviations (SD) show how homogeneous guests are in the evaluation of different quality indicators.

In the next section of the study, EFA was performed to assess the factor structure of perceived service quality. The first step in this process was to check the distribution of data. Because we could not confirm a normal distribution for any of the selected quality indicators of the first set (a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used), it was necessary to use the Principal Axis Factoring method for performing EFA. Based on the results of the first test, we evaluated the suitability of the information for inclusion in the factor model. Thus, based on the value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.943), and the outcome of Bartlett's test of sphericity (χ^2 = 4206.494; degrees of freedom = 406), we estimated that all included variables were suitable for performing EFA. Most indicators had satisfactory commonalities (≥0.50), suggesting that the greater part of their variability can be explained by the influence of the common factors. In the next step, eight quality indicators with too low (<0.50), commonalities (I1, I5, I6, I7, I14, I15, I16, and I25) were excluded from the evaluation process. After a few successive iterations of the factor model evaluation (eight rotations were performed), we finally selected as the most appropriate the model with 19 service quality indicators; while two indicators with too low communalities (I17 and I21) had to be removed from the factor model.

The suitability of the information for inclusion in the final model is also supported by the high value of the KMO indicator (0.942) and the outcome of Bartlett's test (χ^2 = 2945.012; degrees of freedom = 171). Based on a rotated factor solution, we have decided to include two main factor groups (service quality dimensions) in the final model, as they allow a more meaningful interpretation of results. The final (rotated) factor model with two quality dimensions is presented in Table 3. In the final model, factor weights with factor loadings above 0.3 and factors that contain more than three service quality indicators were retained. Indicators belonging to the quality dimensions Empathy (I28, I29, I27, and I26), Reliability (I11, I12, I13) and Assurance (I24, I19) were logically merged into a new common quality dimension called 'ERA.'

Based on the rotated matrix of factor weights presented in Table 3, it is evident that according to guests' perceptions of service quality, only two quality dimensions are important for delivering restaurant service quality: (1) ERA (51.06%) and (2) Tangibles (7.31%). Based on the presented quality dimensions and the values of their total explained variances, it is evident

Table 3 Final-rotated factor solution

(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
I28	0.849	−0.022	I23	0.435	0.386
I11	0.829	−0.140	I18	0.429	0.325
I29	0.822	0.007	I2	−0.086	0.767
I12	0.753	−0.095	I8	−0.036	0.740
I24	0.708	0.074	I20	−0.017	0.731
I4	0.655	0.088	I22	0.112	0.655
I27	0.624	0.142	I10	0.122	0.620
I26	0.622	0.195	I9	0.173	0.577
I19	0.596	0.094	I3	0.270	0.465
I13	0.452	0.271	%*	51.060	7.310

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) quality indicators, (2) empathy, reliability and assurance (era), (3) tangibles. * Percentage of explained variance.

that, according to guests' quality perceptions, the indicators reflecting the quality of service staff (ERA) have by far the greatest importance in assuring restaurant quality, followed by the quality of Tangibles. We believe that further dissection of the results would not contribute to the improvement of the quality of research. Therefore, we have decided to keep the final factor model with two main factor groups (quality dimensions).

Discussion

In order to better understand the results of the statistical analysis presented in Chapter 3, our findings were compared to the results of the previous study performed in the coastal area of Portorož and Piran. Research characteristics and findings of both studies are summarised in Table 4.

The comparison of results from both studies reveals that the highest rated quality indicator was 'Bill accuracy.' It can thus be suggested that restaurant bills were accurate in both studies. Interestingly, in the Portorož and Piran research, the lowest-rated indicator was 'Paying more than planned.' Therefore, we might assume that guests did not pay more than they had initially anticipated. In our study, the lowest-rated indicator was 'Anticipation of guests' individual needs and wants,' which indicates that guests were not completely

Table 4 Comparison of Results between the Two Restaurant-Quality Studies from Slovenian Istria

Research characteristics	Portorož & Piran (coastal area)*	Hinterland (rural area)
Methodology	DINESERV tool (mod. questionnaire)	DINESERV tool (original version)
Time of research	April 2014	April 2019
Research approach	Two-step (perceptions-minus-expectations)	One-step (performance analysis)
Sample size (n)	32 restaurants; 156 domestic guests	25 restaurants; 250 domestic guests
Restaurant type	Restaurants, Inns, Snack facilities	Restaurants, Inns, Snack facilities
Highest rated indicator	Bill accuracy	Bill accuracy
Lowest rated indicator	Paying more than planned	Anticipation of guests' individual needs and wants
Identified quality dimensions (factor structure)	Four dimensions (respectively): Assurance, Restaurant Ambiance, Responsiveness, and Satisfaction and Loyalty	Two dimensions: ERA and Tangibles

Notes * Study conducted in 2015 by Kukanja and Planinc.

satisfied with the way the service staff anticipated their needs and wants.

Furthermore, the comparison of results from both factor analyses reveals that EFA in Portorož and Piran study extracted four factors, which explained 61.70 per cent of the total variance in the data. Research results revealed that guests' perceptions of restaurant service quality in the coastal area were mainly based on the quality of the following four quality dimensions: Assurance, Ambiance, Responsiveness, and Satisfaction and Loyalty. In our study, only two factors were extracted (ERA and Tangibles), which explains 58.37 per cent of the total variance in the data. Although the first factor (ERA) is composed of three quality dimensions (see Table 3), the research result indicates a relatively bipolar service quality structure in rural restaurants in comparison to restaurants located in the coastal area. The factor structure in rural restaurants highlights the importance of the quality of service staff (ERA) and the quality of the physical environment (Tangibles). This is critical because it indicates the importance of functional quality (people) in restaurants located in a rural area. To ensure restaurant quality in rural areas, managers must primarily ensure the quality of service staff and the physical environment. This is also relevant because in the Republic of Slovenia the minimum standards related to the quality of the physical environment are determined by the national rules (see https://www.tgzs.si/zakonodaja). In contrast, there are no minimum standards related to the professional characteristics of service staff.

Taken together, these results suggest that domestic guests in coastal and rural restaurants do not evaluate restaurant service quality based on the same quality indicators. There are several possible explanations for these results. First, the time gap between the two types of research might have significantly influenced guests' quality expectations and/or the level of restaurant offer in both areas. However, there are also other possible explanations for these results, such as: the primary focus of restaurateurs operating in rural area is on local guests (residents), the seasonality of restaurant offerings in the coastal area, the high fluctuation of service staff working in coastal restaurants, restaurant managers' characteristics, rural area managers' demographic characteristics, which might be significantly influenced by the specifics of the 'Mediterranean' way of life, etc. More research on this topic needs to be undertaken before the association between restaurant guests' quality perceptions in both areas is more clearly understood. However, the results of this study are quite encouraging as they indicate a relatively high level of perceived service quality in restaurants located in the Istrian hinterland (average mean value is 4.31).

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to determine how different quality indicators of the institutional DINESERV tool influence domestic guests' quality perception in rural restaurants. Based on qualitative research, we were unable to determine the importance of different quality indicators in restaurants operating in a rural area. Returning to the RQ posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that, in rural Istria, domestic guests perceive restaurant service quality based on two primary quality dimensions: ERA and Tangibles (see also Table 3). This study has also identified nineteen service quality indicators that best explain guests' quality perceptions in rural restaurants: visually attractive dining area, clean neat and appropriately dressed staff, restaurant's décor typical to its image and price range, clean restrooms, clean dining areas, comfortable seats in the dining room, service in the promised time, quick correction of incorrect service, dependable and consistent restaurant, extra effort in handling special requests, employees completely answer questions, comfortable and confident feeling, feeling safe, well-trained, competent and experienced staff, restaurant supports the employees, special feeling, anticipation of guests' individual needs and wants, sympathetic and reassuring employees, and guests' best interest at heart.

The second part of this study was concerned with comparing the results of our study to previous research findings (Kukanja & Planinc, 2015). In comparison to previous research conducted in a coastal area, our study confirmed the importance of different quality dimensions. It can, therefore, be assumed that domestic guests in restaurants located in a coastal and rural area have different quality perceptions regarding restaurant service quality. The present study confirms previous findings (Djekic et al., 2016; Kim, Ng, & Kim, 2009) and contributes additional evidence which suggests that service quality dimensions cannot be generalised. The present findings enhance our understanding of restaurant service quality in rural areas.

The findings of this study have important implications for future practice and quality development strategies, as they provide information about service quality in restaurants operating in a rural area. Once guests' quality perceptions are identified, restaurant managers must strive to provide quality offerings. The key policy priority should, therefore, be to implement a quality management system (e.g., systematic and ongoing analyses of restaurant quality, training and educational programmes for restaurant managers and staff, comparison and exchange of best practices, etc.) at individual (restaurant's) and destination (regional) level.

This study has also found that the cooperation between scholars (academia) and restaurant providers (regarding research into restaurant service quality in rural areas) is generally weak. As restaurants present a basic and vital element of a destination's tourism offer, restaurant service quality should be regularly evaluated. Gastronomy represents a critical element in destination marketing and significantly influence a destination's image. Therefore, restaurant service quality should also be measured by local marketers and developers. In terms of quality control, Ohe and Kurihara (2013) reported the importance of a broader perspective related to local resource management. Especially the nurture of local food heritage and the quality of the partnership between tourism providers and local food producers found to be extremely important for quality assurance and economic development at the destination level.

Despite its contributions, some significant limitations need to be considered. The major limitation of this study is the absence of foreign guests' evaluation of perceived restaurant quality. Another limitation is the time of research, as it was conducted in only a one-month period. Therefore, additional caution must be applied, as the findings might not be completely generalisable. Notwithstanding these limitations, this research has generated many questions in need of further investigation. Future studies should empirically investigate whether differences exist between different segments of guests during different times of the year (especially during high and low season). A further study could also assess restaurant quality in other neighbouring and competitive rural destinations, such as Slovene Karst and Brda, Croatian Istria, and the Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Regarding recommendations for future research, further work could also investigate if differences exist between restaurant managers' and guests' perceptions of service quality.

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Event Competitivness in Heritage Tourism in Rural Croatia

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In recent few years, Croatia's rural areas have been developing various forms of tourism, primarily focused on heritage. Sustainable management of the rich cultural and historical heritage of Croatian rural areas can stimulate the creation of market recognition and competitiveness. Among the critical elements of heritage tourism are the events stemming from the community and its traditions, and which represent that community on the tourism market. Heritage-based events enable the creation of a unique tourism product that, through heritage elements, enables the promotion of Croatian rural destinations, respecting their characteristics and uniqueness. Tourism events and programs provide a successful interpretation of heritage elements, strengthening local identity and creating positive interrelationships between visitors and hosts. This paper aims to explore and propose possibilities for innovation of heritage-based events in rural areas of Croatia, with analysis of an event held in Đakovo: the Đakovo Embroidery Festival. In order to facilitate the competitiveness of Croatian heritage-based cultural events, the paper proposes an event certification model: the CroRuralisHeritage Awards Certification Model. The paper also provides guidelines for the creation of heritage-based tourism events as a vital element in the realisation of innovative and sustainable tourism services to achieve the competitiveness of rural Croatian tourism.

Keywords: heritage, events, sustainable development, rural tourism, Croatia, Đakovo Embroidery
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Introduction

Rural areas have many distinctive features that distinguish them from other, primarily coastal and urban, tourist destinations and that are reflected in their focus on agriculture, unique cultural and historical heritage and the specificity of gastronomic and oenological offerings. In recent decades, rural areas have become increasingly interesting tourist destinations, not only in Croatia but also throughout Europe. According to Eurostat data (2017a), rural areas in Croatia occupy 79.1% of the total territory, with 45.9% of its population. According to Demonja (2014), the rural area in Croatia is determined by the territorial division according to which small administrative units, municipalities, are considered as rural areas and cities as urban ones. This paper explores rural areas of the mainland of Croatia.

In considering tourism development, it is necessary to enable the rural areas to evaluate and protect tangible and intangible heritage and achieve dynamic economic development. Local community values need to be managed sustainably, without disturbing the existing resource base of the rural area and ensuring economic and social benefits for all destination stakeholders (Daniloska & Hadzi Naumova-Mihajlovska, 2015). As an essential stakeholder, the local population is generally more prone to tourism development based on authentic culture, since it is not something unknown, but rather part of their identity of which they are, in principle, proud. Of course, sustainable development principles must be considered, and excessive and unprofessional refinement of culture must be avoided (Sedmak, Planinc, Kociper & Planinc, 2015). Due to the development of modern information technologies, new guidelines in tourism development considerations and the growing interest of tourists in traditions, particular forms of events offered by rural areas are becoming tourists' interest and motivation for travelling. In such new and contemporary conditions of tourism development, it is necessary to enable the creation of value-added offers, while preserving the originality of heritage elements as the basis for creating competitive tourism services in rural areas.

Characteristics of Contemporary Tourism Demand in Croatian Rural Tourism

Knowledge of the socio-demographic structure of visitors, their motives and habits are the basis for achieving the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations (Getz, 2010; Krajičkova & Šauer, 2018). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Europe was the most visited region in the world in 2016, accounting for about half (49.8%) of the 1.24 billion arrivals of international tourists. The richness of European cultures, the diversity of its landscapes, and the quality of tourism infrastructure are probably the essential reasons why tourists will visit Europe in the future. Considering tourist traffic intensity in rural areas, Eurostat (2017b) indicators show that there are more nights spent in accommodation facilities in rural areas than in urban centres of the European Union (European Commission, 2017). Based on these assumptions, rural tourism management can successfully create a recognisable tourism product with significant added value. Added value for stakeholders is manifested in the numerous benefits of rural tourism development (economic, socio-demographic benefits, greater recognition, strengthening of self-awareness and identity) and in ensuring a permanent and sustainable rural development.

The existing tourism demand and supply in Croatian rural areas are not at a satisfactory level. Although the total number of tourists and overnight stays in the whole country is rising, rural areas do not show such intensity of growth and development. In 2016, there were 15,454,000 guests who realized 77,919,000 overnight stays; 2017 recorded a growth in tourism demand, with 17,430,000 arrivals, which is 12.8% more than 2016 and 86,200,000 overnight stays or 10.6% more than in 2016. Looking at Croatia through its three regions (Adriatic, continental and the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County), it can be said that the Adriatic part realized 14,399,000 arrivals (82.61% of the total number) and 79,305,000 overnight stays (92% of the total); Zagreb County had 1,373,000 visitors (7.88% of the total number) and 2,413,000 overnight stays (2.8% of the total) and continental Croatia 1,658,000 visitors (9.51% of the total) and 4,482,000 overnight stays (5.20% of total) (Ministry of Tourism, 2018).

Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Syrmia are economically less developed areas; they are largely emigrated from, and agricultural activity, once the leading economic activity in this region, faces serious problems due to various subjective and objective difficulties. The development of tourism in the area would enable the preservation and development of agriculture, preservation of tradition and local identity, as well as the creation of a new basis for economic and social revival. The stated can be achieved by incorporating heritage into the tourism product in different ways (including events) that would preserve the original heritage value and create new economic benefits. Since we are considering the rural areas of the Republic of Croatia, it is necessary to determine the competitive abilities of rural destinations.

Competitiveness of Rural Tourism Destinations

Although rural areas represent an abundant source of heritage elements and a rich resource base for the creation of tourism offerings, they are unfortunately often not recognised as a valuable potential for tourism offer. Farming, crafts, traditional crafts, gastro-oenological offer, churches, traditional buildings and other elements form a set of heritage motifs that need to be uniquely presented on the tourism market, without disturbing their originality and distinctiveness. This is possible through tourism events. According to Svržnjak, Kasntar, Jerčinović, and Kamenjak (2014), rural tourism is a collective name for the activities and forms of tourism that develop in rural areas and is determined by the natural and cultural resources that are found there. 'Rural tourism' is a very broad term that signifies every tourist activity within a rural area, encompassing various forms of tourism (rural, ecotourism, cultural, rural household tourism, events, etc.).

Similarly, Kušen (2006) mentions that rural tourism is a complex type of tourism composed of different types of tourism and is defined by the features and boundaries of rural areas in which it develops. Dashper (2014) also points to the importance of rural tourism for rural areas, stating that rural tourism offers a possible solution to some of the problems associated with lost economic opportunities and population decline that accompany the waning of agriculture. Many governments and regional authorities have embraced rural tourism as an opportunity to bring new money into rural regions, stimulating growth, providing employment opportunities and thus beginning to halt rural decline (Smolčić Jurdana, 2015). In Croatia, rural tourism and the related activities started to be taken seriously as late as 1996, with the adoption of the Regulation on the provision of catering services in rural households, thus establishing a legal framework for action within the new tourism sector. This was ten years after the European Council had recognised rural tourism as a new form of tourism service that took place in rural areas. The first tourism-oriented rural households were registered in 1998, when there were 32 (Ružić, 2011), in 2014, there were 447 registered rural households, while today there are around 500. In terms of the structure of offerings, almost 80% of them are excursion sites (offering tasting rooms and visits to the estate), while only 20% offer accommodation services (Poslovni.hr, 2018). Although development over two decades has been noticeable, it is not proportional to the development potential of a country with a vibrant tourism tradition, almost 80% rural areas accompanied by the natural, cultural and environmental values of such area. The largest number of rural households is registered in Istria and Dubrovnik-Neretva County, already the most developed Croatian tourist regions. In the continental part of Croatia, there is a lack of accommodation capacities, as well as other rural-related services.

Tourism product development in a rural area is possible only by respecting its special features and by ensuring permanent protection of the resource base, sustainable development, and quality of offerings. These prerequisites can be met by creating unique tourism products: tourism events as the basis for tourism offerings in rural destinations. Their uniqueness is reflected in their continuous dynamic nature; they can be permanently improved and changed according to the needs of the local community and supply and demand, which is why events represent an ideal form of tourism product in rural areas.

The Contribution of Events in Developing Rural Tourism Offer

The scientific literature defines tourism events as an event, occasion, or case, but there are also synonyms such as occurrence, incident or experience that indicate different types of events or activities in the area, especially those more significant and easily memorable (Getz, 2010; Bowdin, Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2008; Ivančić, 2015). Tourism events are among the most critical factors in development strategies and competitiveness increase in many of the world's tourism destinations (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Davidson & Rogers, 2006). Tourism events have a positive social, economic, and cultural impact on a potential event visitor (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 54), affecting his/her level of satisfaction. Positive effects of tourism events are also crucial for the local community as they ensure sustainable well-being and growth of the overall life satisfaction in the destination (growth of standards, social quality of life, etc.) (Drpić, 2017).

A rural tourism destination is competitive when it develops its products and services on the tourism market in a way that ensures tourism consumption increase and that attracts a larger number of visitors, providing them with profitable, satisfactory, and unforgettable experiences while simultaneously increasing the well-being of the local population and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations. Gomezelj Omerzel (2006, p. 169) emphasises that the support of tourism stakeholders is essential for successful development and sustainability of tourism and could help to improve the destination competitiveness. From the above, it can be concluded that tourism destination competitiveness is largely based on sustainable development of basic resources, strengthening the overall economic performance of the whole community (Crouch & Brent Ritchie, 2003), and the synergy of all stakeholders. Destination attractiveness depends primarily on four elements (Crouch & Brent Ritchie, 1999; Porter, 1990): core resource base (culture, history, activities, special events, entertainment and superstructure), supporting factors (infrastructure, availability, offer, hospitality, companies), destination management (marketing, finance, capital, organization, human resource development, information/research, quality of services, visitor management) and qualitative determinants (location, independence, safety, image, brand, value for money).

From the aforementioned, it can be concluded that attractiveness influences tourism destination competitiveness, whose elements destination management can successfully present on the tourism market by using knowledge and skills and by creating tourism events, thus achieving economic benefits for the destination (Drpić, 2017; Andersson & Lundberg, 2013, p. 102). The resource base is the fundamental element of the competitive ability of the destination, and includes culture, history and identity of the rural area, which is conditioned by a variety of historical influences and can be successfully presented through special events.

Tourism events based on heritage in rural areas represent a unique tourism product defined by specific features of the environment and heritage itself. Heritage is the destination's distinctive and unique resource element whose valorisation ensures increased competitiveness on the tourism market by offering a product of high value and recognition. Stipanović, Rudan, and Peršin (2015) underscore the importance of heritage-based events in destination branding. The specific features characterizing heritage-based tourism events in rural areas are specified by the following:

- events in rural areas are the result of people's lives through different historical periods in a given area;
- events make the local community proud of their own cultural and historical heritage and stimulate its preservation (especially folklore, historical events, culinary and religious events, etc.);
- heritage-based events must preserve their authenticity;
- events position the rural destination as the destination of culture and sustainable development;
- events add value to the existing tourism offer of the rural area;
- events create new tourist experiences that become motives for visiting the destination.

The basic assumption of a rural heritage-based tourism event is the active involvement of the local community, which can be achieved by timely information and education about the need to preserve and improve the local tourism offerings, rural areas and the elements of tangible and non-tangible heritage. The local community must be involved in every segment of event planning, organisation, management and development, as well as participate in the creation of corrective actions based on feedback from the tourism market. Heritage-based events represent an element for creating and promoting the desired identity of rural destinations and create higher value, which is reflected in the local quality of life and the upgrading of cultural tourism offerings, which in turn contributes to increased destination competitiveness and satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Figure 1 clearly shows that the prerequisite for competitive advantage is the sustainable and lasting synergy between tourism and heritage, which can be achieved through heritage-based events as the original and unique elements of rural destinations' tourism offerings. This is a mutually conditioned process based on the funnel principle, in which all the positive, as

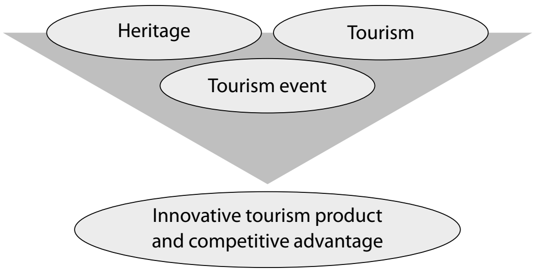

Figure 1 Competitiveness of Rural Tourism Destination: The Funnel Model

well as negative aspects of the observed elements are permeated and mutually complemented, creating a new recognisable tourism product by applying modern knowledge and skills.

Rural destination management must pay particular attention to determining the desired level of heritage involved in the tourism product and enable the sustainable development of tourism events, which can be achieved by incorporating international quality standards or by adopting unique quality standards for an individual event or destination. Interventions that might potentially endanger the value and originality of the tradition need to be prevented. Undesirable influences are possible already in the process of designing a tourism event and are wielded by entrepreneurs and marketing experts in order to achieve greater market attractiveness of the product and to realize greater economic benefits for the destination, creating false stories and distorted images of the role of tangible and non-tangible heritage in the life of the local community. In tourism event development, innovation is an essential driving force of evolution, in which systems adapt to internal changes or changes in the surrounding environment. Innovations take place in all areas of business, societal, cultural, social and private life, thus becoming a critical factor in economic development (Uran Maravić, Križaj & Lesjak, 2015, p. 53).

One of the recognisable heritage and tourism events in rural Croatia is the Đakovo Embroidery Festival, boasting tradition, originality, and contributing to the economic and social advancement of the community for over half a century. For this reason, the authors have explored the visitors' satisfaction with certain elements that affect the competitiveness of both Đakovo and the Đakovo Embroidery Festival (culture, history, infrastructure, accessibility, offer, hospitality, human resources development, information/research, quality of services, location, safety, image, value for money, etc.). The aim is to identify the current level of event recognition and to set guidelines for further improvement of rural Croatia's events on the tourism market.

Đakovo Embroidery Festival: Tourism Event Based on Non-Tangible Rural Heritage

Rural areas in Croatia organise several heritage-based events, but only a small number of them focus on potential tourists and are integrated into rural destinations' tourism offers. One of the numerous well-known and valuable events presenting the cultural and historical values of Croatia is the Đakovo Embroidery festival, an essential event and symbol of the town of Đakovo. The first Slavonia and Baranja folklore festival, 'Đakovo Embroidery,' was held on July 1967 as a specific cultural tourism event marking the International Tourist Year.

In 2016, the festival celebrated its 50th anniversary.[1] It includes many attractive events, including the ceremonial procession of all the participants, the opening and closing ceremonies, equestrian competitions, parade of the horse-drawn carts, gastronomic and musical programmes, and others. This festival was created and remained on the exceptionally strong foundations of folk heritage in Đakovo, for many reasons one of the most important centres of Croatian folklore. One of the symbols of Đakovo Embroidery, Ljelje (the Procession of Queens), has been inscribed on the World Heritage List. Every spring on Pentecost, Ljelje/Queens from Gorjani move in a procession from house to house, performing a ritual composed of special songs and dances with sabres (Min-

[1] According to the estimates in the Cultural Strategy of the City of Đakovo, Đakovo Embroidery gathers more than five thousand participants from all over Croatia, but also from abroad, and visitors can enjoy the beauty of folk customs, costumes, songs, dance, handicrafts, gastronomic specialties (Đakovo Tourist Board, personal communication, 2018).

Table 1 Number of Arrivals and Overnight Stays in Đakovo 2010–2017

Year	Whole year		Đakovo Embroidery Festival		Đakovo Embroidery share (%)	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
2010	6,898	3,417	1,063	567	15.41	16.59
2011	7,290	3,815	1,422	782	19.51	20.50
2012	7,336	4,153	1,228	662	16.74	15.94
2013	9,315	5,206	1,818	996	19.52	19.13
2014	11,021	5,690	1,607	868	14.58	15.25
2015	14,027	6,597	2,239	1,228	15.96	18.61
2016	14,489	7,518	2,602	1,521	17.96	20.23
2017	19,518	8,965	4,137	2,040	21.20	22.76
Total	89,894	45,361	16,116	8,664	17.93	19.10

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) overnight stays, (2) arrivals. Based on data from Đakovo Tourist Board (personal communication, 2018).

Table 2 Number of Participants and Visitors to Đakovo Embroidery Festival

Year	Participants	Est. no. of visitors	Increase/decrease	
			(1)	(2)
2015	2,739	80,000	–	–
2016*	3,363	100,000	+22.78	+25.00
2017	2,743	110,000	−18.74	+10.00
Total	8,845	290,000	–	–

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) participants, (2) overnight stays. Based on data from Đakovo Tourist Board (personal communication, 2018).

istry of Culture, 2018a). Another essential part of the festival is 'bećarac' – a vocal or vocal-instrumental song popular in Slavonia, Baranja and Syrmia, usually sung at weddings and other joyous occasions (Ministry of Culture, 2018b). Every year, Đakovo Embroidery also presents the cultural heritage from the Croatian diaspora; mostly Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also Australia and New Zealand, the United States, and Canada. Occasionally, folklore societies from Germany, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and New Zealand are also present, making Đakovo Embroidery an international event, increasing market recognition of Đakovo, Slavonia and the Republic of Croatia on the global tourism market. Positive impressions left on participants from abroad represent free advertising and word-of-mouth recommendations based on the non-tangible heritage of the Republic of Croatia.

Đakovo Embroidery has a significant impact on the overall tourism promotion of the area, which is also visible in the increased number of visitors to Đakovo during the event. According to Đakovo Tourist Board (personal communication, 2018), the number of festival visitors has been continuously increasing from 2015 to 2017. In the observed period, the number of visitors to the event is estimated at 290,000 (see Table 1).

In the observed period, the number of Đakovo Embroidery Festival participants differs only slightly, with the largest number recorded at the Festival's 50th anniversary, when 3,336 participants attended the event. At the time of the event, the number of visitors, as well as overnight stays, increases with minor fluctuations. In 2010, there were 1,063 overnight stays and 567 arrivals, while 2017 recorded 4,137 overnight stays and 2,040 arrivals, representing a 289,18% increase of the number of overnight stays and 259,79% increase of the number of visitors. The number of arrivals in 2017 makes up for 21.20% of the total number of arrivals, and 22.76% of the total number of overnight stays, which makes a significant increase compared to 2010 when the ratios were 15.41% and 16.59%, respectively (see Table 2).

Methodology

The authors conducted empirical research with primary data in which they used a structured questionnaire, translated and offered in the Croatian and English languages, to the participants who attended the event and who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research when asked. No difficulties occurred during the data gathering procedure. The questionnaire consisted of six parts; the first determining the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, followed by determining the motive of arrival to the destination and the event; the means of informing prior to the arrival to the destination; the way of arrival to the destination, and the level of satisfaction with the elements of the offer, which was determined using a Likert scale. The questions were prepared according to the methodologies of previously undertaken research studies such as TOMAS (Institute for Tourism, 2008; 2018), *Guidelines: Survey Procedures for Tourism Economic Impact Assessment of Gated Events and Festivals* (Research Resolutions & Consulting, 2007), and Getz (2010) in order to determine the necessity to know the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors as the basic element for creating a successful event. The main goal is to investigate the importance of satisfaction of the Đakovo Embroidery visitors and to determine the characteristics of the users of the Đakovo Embroidery service, in order to develop guidelines for further improvement of the tourism offerings and, consequently, a more competitive position of the city of Đakovo on the tourism market (Drpić, 2017). The collected research results were processed using SPSS 2.0, Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation, and Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.

Results

During Đakovo Embroidery 2016, a random sample of 57 respondents was surveyed,[2] of which women made up 52.6% and men 47.4%. The average age of visitors is 39.11 years. As far as their educational structure is concerned, 36.8% of the respondents have a secondary education, 57.9% higher education and 5.3% of the respondents have a doctoral degree. In terms of the respondents' country of permanent residence, most are from Croatia (36.8%), Slovenia (31.6%), and Germany (15.8%).

More than half of the respondents were visiting the Đakovo Embroidery festival for the first time (63.2%), but there is also a significant proportion of those who visited the event several times (15.8% twice, 15.8% five times and 5.3% six times). It can be concluded that a quarter of the respondents are regular visitors to the event. The respondents mostly used hotel accommodation (42.1%), private accommodation (31.6%), and friends or acquaintances (26.3%). Almost all the respondents came to the festival individually (84.2%), spending between one and two days in the destination.

Cultural heritage is the primary motive for coming to the city of Đakovo (36.8%), while the primary motives for visiting Đakovo Embroidery are acquaintances' recommendation (36.8%) and the image of the tourism event (21.1%). Most of the respondents become informed about the Đakovo Embroidery festival via the internet (42.1%) and television (31.6%). This fact underscores the importance of modern information technology in the promotion of destinations and events, as well as pre-sale and post-sales activities, especially since the Đakovo Embroidery festival does not have an official website. Visitor consumption is an essential element in assessing the success of the event and its competitiveness, and in making decisions about event improvement. The results of the survey show relatively low visitor consumption in Đakovo. During their stay, the visitors intend to spend €195.26 of which the largest share is dedicated to transport, accommodation, and food. Interestingly enough, a significant part of the funds is spent on cultural contents (13.88%), i.e. €27.11, of which €14.47 are to be spent at the event itself (53.37% of the amount to be spent on culture and 7.41% of the total).

In order to make the right decisions for improving the existing tourism offer, destination management needs to be aware of the level of satisfaction with individual elements of the offerings and increase competitiveness on the tourism market by removing the weak points. The respondents evaluated each event element with scores from 1 to 5, with –1 being 'very dissatisfied' and 5 'very satisfied.'

Table 3 shows that content recognition and quality are an essential element of event success. The respondents showed the highest level of satisfaction with interpretation quality of event participants/moderators – presenters, with a mean value 4.42, followed by attractiveness of the event with a mean value of 4.26. The lowest level of satisfaction refers to information availability, for which the arithmetic mean of 2.21 indicates the need for a more active use of marketing and modern information technology. The respondents show a high level of satisfaction (3.53) with the image of the destination.

[2] The results of the research were published as part of the PhD thesis (Drpic, 2017).

Table 3 Level of Satisfaction with Individual Elements of Đakovo Embroidery

Group	Elements	(1)	(2)	(3)
Content recognition and quality	Recognition/image (prior to arrival)	3.53	2.32	65.72
	Information availability	2.21	2.62	118.55
	Quality of information/marketing materials	3.21	0.98	30.53
	Event organisation quality	4.00	0.58	14.50
	Event authenticity	4.11	0.66	16.06
	Attractiveness	4.26	0.45	10.56
	Interpretation quality of event participants/moderators – presenters	4.42	0.51	11.54
	Total	3.68	0.71	19.44
Infrastructure	Traffic accessibility	4.37	0.76	17.39
	Safety	4.79	0.42	8.77
	Cleanliness of attraction site	4.16	0.50	12.02
	Cleanliness of sanitary facilities	3.42	0.69	20.18
	Diversity of side events	1.89	2.00	105.82
	Total	3.73	1.02	27.37
Staff, pricing, amenities	Opening hours of catering and hotel facilities	2.58	1.35	52.33
	Prices of beverages or side products	3.95	0.52	13.16
	Souvenirs	3.95	0.70	17.72
	Staff friendliness	3.53	0.84	23.80
	Staff knowledge and expertise	3.11	1.88	60.45
	Value for money	3.68	0.58	15.76
	Total	3.47	0.49	14.08
Overall satisfaction level		3.53	0.51	14.45

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) average satisfaction score, (2) standard deviation, (3) correlation coefficient.

Another highly rated element is the attractiveness of the event (4.26), suggesting that a varied programme, especially if based on original heritage, can result in high visitor satisfaction. The respondents are also very satisfied with event authenticity (4.11) and event organisation quality (4.00). Mean deviation from the average level of satisfaction with the recognition and quality of the Đakovo Embroidery festival is 0.71. Variability of visitor satisfaction with content recognition and quality is relatively low.

When it comes to infrastructure, the respondents show the highest level of satisfaction with safety (4.79). The respondents are generally very satisfied with Đakovo infrastructure (3.73). It should be noted that the cleanliness of the attraction site (4.16), the cleanliness of sanitary facilities (3.42) and traffic accessibility (4.37) are all highly rated. The lowest level of satisfaction refers to the diversity of side events, with a mean value as low as 1.89.

Mean deviation from the average level of satisfaction with the staff, pricing and amenities is 0.49. The variability of visitor satisfaction with infrastructure is relatively low. The highest level of satisfaction (3.95) is with prices of beverages and side products. The lowest level of satisfaction refers to souvenirs (2.47), indicating the current lack of original souvenirs in the tourism offering and the need to design and offer them. The visitors are mostly satisfied (2.58) with the opening hours of catering and hotel facilities. This indicates that destination management, in agreement with the local authorities, needs to change the current opening hours of catering facilities. The visitors are satisfied with value for money (3.68) and staff friendliness (3.53). Although the respondents are satisfied with staff quality, it is not at a satisfactory level given that staff knowledge and expertise are rated 3.11, indicating the need for further investment in education and quality of human resources in the destination. The mean deviation from the average level of satisfaction with the infrastructure of Đakovo Embroidery is 1.02, while the variability of visitor satisfaction with staff, pricing, and amenities is relatively low. The overall level of satisfaction with the event is high, with arithmetic mean 3.53. It can be concluded that 52.6% of all surveyed respondents are very satisfied with their visit to Đakovo Embroidery, while 47.4% are satisfied. Mean deviation from the average level of overall satisfaction with the event is 0.51, and variability of overall visitor satisfaction with the event, in general, is relatively low. The development and long-term sustainability of rural heritage-based tourism event can only be ensured if there are clear standards and measures for achieving a competitive and recognisable rural tourism range of tourism offerings.

Opportunities for Event Development – The Example of Đakovo Embroidery

In order to ensure a sustainable competitive position on the market characterised by constant changes, new forms of tourism demand, and an abundance of competitors, rural tourism destinations need to design a model for evaluating the quality of contents and elements of rural heritage-based tourism events.

The process of creating a heritage-based tourism event is complex and demanding and requires a variety of knowledge and skills from destination management, as well as modern technology solutions such as interactive web sites, applications, virtual tours of Đakovo and Đakovo Embroidery, etc.

In addition, it is necessary to ensure a permanent and consistent quality of planning, organisation, implementation, information and monitoring, as well as corrective activities. Unfortunately, there is no statistical monitoring of the number of event visitors, which prevents the creation of appropriate development plans and strategies. Event development could be steered by international or national quality standards, such as ISO 20121 for sustainable event management, designed in 2012 at the time of the Olympic Games in London, and applied during the Eurovision Song Contest in Stockholm, achieving enviable results in sustainability management, especially in reducing the use of hazardous waste materials, energy consumption, and exhaust gases. By using only biodegradable materials for beverages, the organizers prevented the creation of two tons of waste, while energy saving was achieved by using special water heating systems and encouraging the use of local food (see https://www.iso.org/iso-20121-sustainable-events.html).

In addition to international ISO standards, it is possible to design internal or national standards that are more closely tailored to the needs of the local community and the local tourism market. One example of a possible standardisation system in Croatia presented in this paper is the CroRuralisHeritage program. The basic purpose of certification is to achieve greater transparency and added value for all stakeholders in the Đakovo destination, but it must be subject to permanent improvements using feedback systems and modern information technologies. Value assessment of the Đakovo Embroidery festival would be performed by evaluating the three groups of parameters on which Đakovo Embroidery is based: heritage (tangible and intangible), event (Đakovo Embroidery) and rural destination (Đakovo). See Table 4.

The certification committee could include:

- Representatives of the Đakovo Tourist Board
- Representatives of the Đakovo city
- Representatives of cultural workers
- Representatives of tourism workers
- Representatives of scientists and professionals
- Local community – participation in public discussion of the assessment results

Each representative could award points that would affect the final result at a predetermined rate, with the aim of preventing individual preferences and bias. One essential element for event certification of the Đakovo Embroidery festival is its influence on the sustainable destination development of Đakovo, as well as

Table 4 Đakovo Embroidery certification parameters

Heritage (30)	Event (30)	Rural destination (40)
Heritage preservation. Effects of previous reconstructions. Heritage repurpose possibility. Adopted destination strategy for sustainable heritage management. Economic performance of heritage.	Economic sustainability of the event. Implementation of international and national quality standards Environmental responsibility (RES, green perspectives . . .). Development opportunities infrastructure.	Attitudes of the local community. Tourism event harmonization with local development strategies and the existing tourism product.

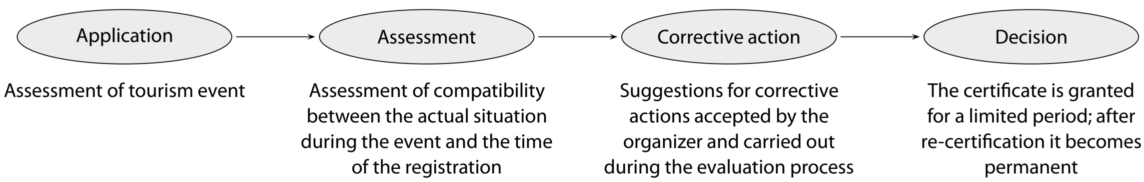

Figure 2 Application process for CroRuralisHeritage certification

the sustainable management of tangible and intangible heritage in the overall micro and macro environment. The purpose of event assessment by the certification board is to determine the weak links in the chain in order to remove them, and to emphasise the strong links as the basis for the creation of competitive advantage. The CroRuralisHeritage certification process is conceived as a national system for evaluating heritage-based tourism events held in Croatian rural areas, facilitating the promotion on the tourism market through CroRuralisHeritage brand. The process of obtaining a certificate is conceived as a several months-long process that would begin no later than six months prior to the event. A heritage-based event would be applied by either the event organizer or a target group within the destination.

The assessment of comparability between the application and the actual situation would be carried out by an assessment team that would, based on the discrepancies noted, draw up a list of corrective actions that the organizer would have to conduct before the end of the current event. After the proposed corrections are implemented, the organiser invites the evaluators to carry out the final evaluation of the event and make the decision about awarding the CroRuralisHeritage certificate. The certificate is awarded for one year, followed by a re-evaluation process. A re-awarded certificate is considered permanent and can only be denied in case of breaching of the basic principles of certification (i.e., violation of heritage authenticity, the rural area, and the general resource base) (Figure 2).

Conclusion

Although comprising a significant part of the Croatian territory, rural areas are not sufficiently recognized and included in the tourism offerings; most of the tourist traffic continues to take place in seaside destination and resorts.

Culture and heritage represent essential elements in preserving the tradition and strengthening local identity as a prerequisite for creating a permanently successful heritage-based tourism event and guaranteeing its sustainability on the market. Considering that the rural area is rich in heritage and has a preserved resource base, it is an ideal area for improving the existing tourism offer of the Republic of Croatia. This paper presents the Đakovo Embroidery festival as a tourism event model whose success and longevity are based on heritage and which represents an essential factor in the preservation of heritage, especially its most vulnerable aspect: intangible heritage.

The limitation of this research lies in its small number of respondents, and further research should be directed to other destination stakeholders, such as local population, participants, and management. The research should be repeated in a reasonable period on a larger statistical sample. Research accuracy would be improved by the organisers' more precise statistical tracking of number of visitors, since it is now only based on estimation. The authors, therefore, suggest implementation of possibly on-line or application-based registration of visitors before they come to the event. The research has pointed to the importance of using modern means of communicating with the market through websites, social networks, Q bar codes, smartphone app development, and the like. The Đakovo Embroidery Festival is only present on Facebook, and does not have its own web site or mobile app, which makes it challenging to achieve a sufficient level of presence in the media of the event itself, thereby disrupting its actual developmental and competitive potential on the market. This is also perceived as one of the significant shortcomings of the event.

The implementation of the proposed certification program CroRuralisHeritage would enhance rural tourism destination recognition, the creation of added value of the overall tourism product and long-term sustainability of the destination, heritage and tourism events. The process of designing a heritage-based tourism product must be based on feedback from the target market and the local community, allowing the destination management to take timely corrective action in order achieve sustainable management of the rural heritage-based tourism event.

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The Distinctiveness of Rural Tourism Marketing Practices: The Case Study of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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This paper seeks to explore the distinctiveness of marketing practices of small rural-based businesses in the context of a so-called laggard economy in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) economy: Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since this study is exploratory, we employed a qualitative methodology using the multiple-case study and semi-structured interviews. We collected nine cases of small rural-based tourism business and conducted interviews with their owners. The data analysis is guided by the interpretive research paradigm. The results show that the majority of small rural-based tourism businesses are engaged in marketing activities, and they seem to have an entrepreneurial and professional attitude toward marketing actions. Moreover, the majority of small rural-based tourism business follows the so-called zoning model promoting the outstanding natural beauty and integrity to visitors. Based on the critical concepts identified during the coding process in the analysis, we extracted the following themes: product variety, the authenticity of experience, marketing capabilities, and business challenges. This study deepens our understanding of marketing activities of small tourism business in rural areas. Moreover, it provides valuable information to policy-makers to design and implement policies/programmes that foster the growth of these types of businesses.

Keywords: rural areas, marketing, tourism development, small tourism business
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Introduction

In recent decades, tourism activity has increased tremendously in many rural areas. Rural tourism is developing rapidly due to the growing need of the urban population to escape from every-day life and to connect with nature and traditional lifestyles (Pato & Kastenholz, 2017). Rural tourism attracts new residents, tourists, and entrepreneurs, and, thus, it is considered to be the instrument of revitalisation and development of the life and work in rural areas (Findlay, Short, & Stockdale, 2000). Despite the increasing importance of the rural tourism, there is a paucity of research into the marketing practices of small rural-based tourism businesses (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004; Pato & Kastenholz, 2017; Siemens, 2007). More research is needed as the majority of the rural-based tourism businesses is small-scale and has been owned by individuals with little marketing knowledge and skills (Siemens, 2007). The lack of marketing knowledge and skills impacts the small rural-based businesses in a variety of ways, ranging from every-day operations to access to financing, and enhances the risk of business failure.

The present study contributes to the tourism literature by providing the insight into marketing practices of small rural-based tourism businesses in the context of the so-called laggard economy in the South-Eastern Europe (SEE) economy: Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notwithstanding the success in studying small rural-based tourism business in many Western European societies, researchers have paid less attention to the cases of SEE countries, which mostly have different political, economic, and social contexts that are very important for business success. Bearing this in mind and respecting the characteristics of the fragile environment of laggard SEE economies (e.g., weak policies and institutions with the lack of capacity to support small tourism businesses), this study aims to verify and expand existing theories and frameworks pertaining to marketing practices of small rural-based tourism business beyond the Western context. Due to complex administrative structures at national, regional, canton, and municipal levels, there is no integrative framework that supports systemic advancement, education and improvement of the tourism industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Shultz, Peštek, & Geroulis, 2015). As a result, Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to the lower group of countries (ranked 105 out of 140), according to the *Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019* (The World Economic Forum, 2019). Furthermore, the current policies and practices in the tourism sector are inefficient, and there is a lack of holistic tourism planning across national, regional, canton, and municipal levels (Shultz et al., 2015). These predisposing factors harm the performance of tourism businesses, particularly small businesses located in the rural area, which offers many opportunities for further investigation (though perhaps more state-oriented).

Moreover, the present study identifies critical challenges of small rural-based tourism business and, thereby, provides valuable information to policy-makers to create and implement policies/programmes that foster the growth of these types of businesses. Considering the importance of marketing in rural tourism and given the lack of studies on this topic, the main research questions of this study are: How do small rural-based tourism businesses implement marketing concept? What are the main business challenges faced by small rural-based tourism businesses?

Rural Tourism and Small Tourism Businesses

The concept of rural tourism has different meanings for different regions, regional and international organisations (e.g., UNWTO, OECD, EU) as well as individual scholars. UNWTO, for example, defines rural tourism as tourism product 'that gives visitors a personalized contact, a taste of human-environment of countryside and, as far as possible, allow them to participate in activities, tradition and lifestyles of local people' (Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam, & King, 2014, p. 317). Similarly, Nagaraju and Chandrashekara (2014, p. 42) described rural tourism as 'any form of tourism that showcases the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations.' The academic literature presents rural tourism as an umbrella concept encompassing different niche types of tourism such as agritourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, and ecotourism (e.g., Pröbstl-Haider, Melzer, & Jiricka, 2014; Silva & Leal, 2015). Bearing in mind that rural tourism creates positive economic, social, and environmental impacts on the local communities, it is perceived to be a crucial instrument for the revitalisation of rural areas (Silva & Leal, 2015).

Rural tourism is a complex phenomenon characterised by following features: (1) located in rural areas; (2) functionally rural, i.e., built upon the services/activities offered by small-scale enterprises; (3) direct contact with nature and heritage; (4) tourist experience co-creation as it allows the participation in the activities, traditions and lifestyles of local people; (5) provides personalised contact; (6) rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements; (7) traditional in its nature, growing slowly and organically; (8) represents the complex pattern of the rural environment's, economy, history and location; (9) generates a high percentage of tourism revenue, and, thereby, contributed to the well-being of rural community (Roberts and Hall, 2001, p. 16).

To capture multiple facets of rural tourism, the concept of integrated rural tourism has been proposed (Saxena, Clark, Oliver, & Ilbery, 2007). The concept of integrated rural tourism suggests that the promotion of rural tourism development ought to be based on 'strengths of local rural resources – cultural, historical, landscape-based – and the interplay between local actors and networks of exchange in order to improve the competitiveness of the rural destination' (Saxena & Ilbery, 2010, p. 260). Bearing in mind the complex nature of rural tourism, for the purpose of this study we opted for the broad definition proposed by Komppula (2007): 'rural tourism typically refers to tourism outside densely populated areas and tourism centres' (p. 123) Given the largely rural nature of territory in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the fact the more than half of country's population is involved in agriculture and rural-based activities (Alterural, 2009), such a broad definition allows us to include almost all tourism activity within the rural areas.

Rural tourism creates an opportunity for small-scale and family-owned businesses. Although the literature offers a plethora of discussion about what constitutes a small business and what denominators ought to be employed, there is no general consensus about this issue. Typically, scholars tend to define small tourism businesses based upon the quantitative indicators such as the number of employees, room or beds (Skokic & Morrison, 2011). In this study, we opted for a definition devised by the European Commission in 1996, which is widely accepted among scholars and practitioners. According to this definition, small businesses are firms that employ less than 50 employees. In a rural area, the tourism industry is mostly composed of such small businesses, indicating that these businesses have a pivotal role in the development of rural tourism and rural economy.

Rural Tourism Marketing and Small Tourism Businesses

Rural tourism marketing can be described as a 'platform for defining business strategies and objectives and the development of offerings that deliver unique experiences to consumers and generate profit for rural tourism destinations' (Mihailovic & Moric, 2012, p. 267). As Saxena (2016) argues, it is a 'complex phenomenon that explains how rurality is experienced and shaped by rural tourism actors and a wide array of socio-cultural, political and material processes and practices' (Saxena, 2016, p. 4). Hence, marketing plays a significant role at every stage of the travel decision-making process and drives a potential visitor along the marketing funnel (i.e., attention-interest-desire-action). Although the role of rural marketing has been acknowledged, there is a paucity of research on how a marketing concept manifests itself through practices employed by small rural-based tourism businesses (Pato & Kastenholz, 2017). The existing rural tourism marketing literature suggests that small rural-based businesses are aware of the importance of market-oriented culture (information capture, information dissemination, and the response to market) and that the adoption of market-orientated culture among them has two specific characteristics (Polo-Peña, Frías-Jamilena, & Rodrígues-Molina, 2012): (1) small rural-based businesses tend to use informal mechanisms for capturing and disseminating market information within the business; (2) small rural-based businesses are characterised by a high level of involvement with, and commitment to, the business on the part of the owner/manager (Polo-Peña et al., 2012).

Drawing on the 'practice turn' in marketing, Pato & Kastenholz (2017) argue that marketing activities and practices differ among small rural-based businesses. By analysing the way how small rural-based businesses interpret the marketing process and the degree of their engagement across different marketing practices, Pato & Kastenholz (2017) identified the four clusters of small rural-based business: 'passive-inward oriented businesses,' 'poorly active businesses,' 'moderately active businesses,' and 'active-market-oriented businesses.' While passive-inward oriented businesses tend to follow a resource-driven approach or inside-out perspective, active-market oriented businesses successfully compete on their ability to balance the sense market trends ahead of its competitors (market-driven approach or outside-in perspective) and their internal resources (resource-driven approach or inside-out perspective). Furthermore, Pato & Kastenholz (2017) provided support for the view that marketing concept (here meaning engaging in strategic and operative marketing activities) is at the core of the success of small rural-based businesses.

The successful implementation of rural tourism marketing is not straightforward. Small rural-based tourism businesses are facing a plethora of challenges within the areas of marketing, operation, and infrastructure (Siemens, 2007). The existing literature suggests that internal factors (e.g., expertise and management skills, financial resources) and external factors (e.g., networks and environmental dynamism conditions) are also of great importance for the success of small rural-based businesses (Irvine & Anderson, 2004). The challenges that arise from the lack of internal resources can be overcome through formal and informal networking in the tourism industry. As suggested by Saxena & Ilbery (2008), the creation of empowering networks helps small rural-based businesses to realise the network advantage, by aggregating and creating new knowledge and building capacity. In terms of limited access to financial resources and lack of marketing expertise, it is necessary to establish public sector support as well as to design and implement adequate infrastructure policy (Ateljevic, 2009).

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative methodology was applied to provide answers to research questions. We opted for semi-structured interviews as they offer flexibility in qualitative inquiries (Flick, 2009). More precisely, semi-structured interviews are open discussions between interviewers and interviewees about predefined themes with the possibility of adding or excluding themes from the interview scenario as interview proceeds. The interviews started with a brief explanation of the purpose of this research and the general description of the enterprise(s) owned by interviewees. The main part of interviews was organised around discussion themes related to the scope and variety of services/activities offered, marketing activities they carried out, collaboration and networking with other tourism businesses, perceived challenges facing their business, and plans. At the end of interviews, interviewees had the opportunity to add theme(s) that they considered relevant but which had not been covered during the interview. The interviews were carried out at multiple-sites, i.e., at interviewees' businesses at a time convenient to them. A list of 64 small based-tourism businesses was obtained from Alterural, a non-profit association dedicated to the promotion and professionalisation of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and it served as the sampling frame for this study. The purposeful sampling was used for the selection of small rural-based tourism businesses that meet the following criteria: (1) operating in the rural area; (2) being in business at least three years; (3) having less than 50 employees. Overall, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted during two months (June and July 2018), and each interview lasted from two to three hours. The interviews were transcribed first, and then the content was analysed. Each interview was coded using Arabic numbers (Table 1), and all quotes presented in the following text are linked with the code number. A brief description of selected cases helps us to understand the setting in which the small rural-based businesses operate.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define the qualitative data analysis as 'working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns.' Thus, in the present study, we followed the standard format of qualitative data analysis (identifying, coding, and categorising themes). First, raw data from interviews were broken down into fragments in order to analyse, conceptualise, and develop concepts. In the second step, relationships between concepts are identified in order to group them into themes. Based on the key concepts identified during the coding process in the analysis, we extracted the following themes: product variety, the authenticity of experience, marketing capabilities, and business challenges.

Results and Discussion

In the following section, we will outline the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. In the first step of our data analysis, we compared the raw data, i.e., the content of each interview and identified

Table 1 Description of Cases and Interviewees

Case code/business characteristics	
1	A family-owned business established in 2011. It offers accommodation in apartments decorated in line with Bosnian tradition, restaurant services, organisation of events (birthday parties, team building, business lunches), as well as outdoor activities (horse riding lessons for children and adults, riding for experienced riders, traditional games like bag racing and rope pulling).
2	A family-owned business established in 2009 and located in the rural area known by its beautiful nature (water branches, cascades and waterfalls). It offers accommodation, food and drink services, a variety of outdoor activities. Moreover, this establishment is engaged in the organic production of fruits and vegetables.
3	A family-owned business founded in 2015. Accommodation capacity includes 75 beds in luxury apartments and cottages. In addition to the food and drink services, visitors have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor activities such as rafting, hiking, biking and photo safari with jeeps.
4	A family-owned business founded in 2016 and located in the mountain area. It offers catering services, and the menu is based on Bosnian specialities prepared by the wife of the owner. Currently, this establishment does not offer accommodation services.
5	A family-owned business founded in 2015 and located in a rural area. It offers accommodation, food and drink services as well as outdoor activities such as football and beach volleyball, trails, horseback riding.
6	A family-owned business that provides accommodation in apartments with four or six beds. Also, it has a restaurant with 70 indoor seats and an outdoor garden with a capacity of 200 seats.
7	A family-owned business established in 2008. It provides accommodation in a family house located in the traditional-style garden. Visitors can enjoy dishes prepared according to traditional recipes.
8	A family-owned business that offers accommodation, food and drink services. Also, owners are growing fruits and vegetables and raising livestock in smallholder (cows and sheep).
9	A family-owned business established in 2010. It offers accommodation, food and drink services. Also, the establishment has its own production of organic food.

the most frequent terms appearing across interviews. In the second step, we identified key concepts and synthesised them into sub-themes and themes (Table 2).

Personal commitment of owners. The cases studied are family-owned and family-run businesses. They are mostly founder-led enterprises characterised by entrepreneurial orientation (innovativeness, proactiveness, and propensity for taking the risk), and long-term vision. Inspiring leadership is another distinctive characteristic of the enterprises studied. Moreover, they are nourishing a sense of community – the enterprise is not an isolated entity that pursues only profit maximisation but instead, it is a member of a community that contributes to the well-being of local residents. One of the owners of enterprises stated:

> The key to the success of our business is love, courage and sacrifice for what we do. The dedication of the whole family to our business throughout the day. New facilities are needed to keep tourists longer, but also to extend the season. [Case 6]

Despite the limited access to external financing sources, the enterprises studied are aware of the importance of investments. Hence, they seek to provide investments, no matter how difficult it is.

> In the coming years, we plan to renovate the mill, where flour will be milled. Also, we have plans regarding the construction of a children's ski lift, the expansion of accommodation facilities and the introduction of new facilities such as the small souvenir shop. [Case 7]

Table 2 Summary of Case Insights: Cross-Case Presentation

Emerged themes	Emerged sub-themes
Personal commitment of owners	Family, long-term vision, passion, love, courage, dedication, planning, risk-taking, innovativeness, development, investments
Product variety	Accommodation, food, horse riding, hiking, rafting, trails, organic production, event organising
Authentic experience	Traditional food, cultural heritage, local people, uniqueness, servicescape, tourist experience co-creation
Marketing capabilities	customer-linking capability. market-sensing capability, channel- bonding capability, internal marketing capabilities (product, price, promotion and place (distribution)
Business challenges	Seasonality, public infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, lack of common legislative framework in the area of rural tourism, limited access to financing

This finding is in line with the view that essential characteristics and drivers of success amongst small rural-based businesses are the owner's energy and personal commitment to goals (Zapalska & Brozik, 2007; Getz, Carlsen, & Morrison, 2004).

Product variety. Most enterprises offer a large variety of products, including accommodation, food and drink services, and the production and sale of organic food. Moreover, several enterprises provide opportunities for visitors to take part in outdoor leisure and adventure activities (e.g., horse riding, photo safari, fishing, hunting, biking). Product expansion allows them to create 'all-around offers' that will lead to unique tourist experiences, and consequently, enhance visitor satisfaction. Product variety strategy is partly motivated by the economic gains obtained by the provision of a flexible array of services activities. However, product variety can also be seen as a specific response of tourism enterprises to market demands. One of the enterprises in this study provides horse-riding lessons for children/adults as well as horse-riding tours for experienced riders, and he explained the strategy as follows:

> We have turned our love for nature and passion for horses into a successful business. We purchased five Arabian horses and established an equestrian club where visitors can experience horse riding in a natural, safe, and family-friendly environment. We thought people would come just to enjoy horse riding. However, it turned out that when the visitors were already here, they wanted to stay for a night or two, they wanted meals and refreshments. Driven by visitors' needs, we decided to expand our horse-riding business into accommodation and food services. Today, our guests can stay in our apartments that offer accommodation for four or six people. Also, they can choose between half board and full board meal plans in our restaurant. [Case 1]

Another enterprise is in charge of the whole value chain as it offers meals prepared by the ingredients (fruits and vegetables) coming from its own organic production. He explained the benefit of having control over the whole value chain as follows:

> To be honest, we do not earn much money from growing the raspberries or from making homemade juices and jams. However, we want to serve fresh and healthy meals for our visitors. We want to offer high-quality food for our visitors. [Case 9]

Although for some enterprise's product expansion was strategically planed, some of them argued that product development is actually the response to market demands:

> There is a shortage of accommodation facilities. Currently, we have fifty beds, and we cannot satisfy market demand during the pick summer

> season. Therefore, the plan is to build a bungalow with an additional number of beds as well as a new restaurant. [Case 2]

In general, all enterprises from this study are seeking ways to create overall tourist experience by providing accommodation, food, and a wide array of nature- and adventure-based activities. In addition to being able to meet market demand, they are also capable of anticipating visitors' needs and design 'all-around' offers that will create a memorable tourist experience. This finding is in line with the view that the strategy of expanding the scope and variety of product/services/activities can be seen as an effective and efficient mechanism of transforming traditional rural tourism households into professional businesses (Brandth & Haugen, 2011; Engeset & Heggem, 2015).

Authentic experience. Research conducted among enterprises shows that authenticity also lies at the core of these businesses. This authenticity comes in different shapes. The staged aspect of authenticity is reflected in the way that traditional dishes are prepared and presented. The importance of authenticity of gastronomic experience was discussed by one entrepreneur as follows:

> We are growing organic vegetables and fruits in our garden, and we are raising livestock in smallholder (cows and sheep). We have our own authentic wooden wheel of an old watermill. My wife prepares the dishes using the traditional Bosnian recipes, and she is dressed up in traditional Bosnian clothing. We are trying to create a unique and authentic experience by preserving our cultural heritage assets. [Case 7]

Moreover, visitors have the opportunity to participate in agricultural work activities like feeding animals, picking fresh fruits or processing fruit juices and jams. The focus on tourist experience co-creation is explained by one entrepreneur, as follows:

> The guests can pick fruit and vegetables from our garden and together with our cook prepare their meals. Also, they have the opportunity to engage in the production of jams and pickles. [Case 9]

The above-discussed practices are in line with the co-creation theory (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) and the service-dominant logic (S-D logic) in marketing. According to co-creation theory and S-D logic, a tourist is an active participant rather than a passive recipient. Therefore, both service providers and tourists have to collaborate in order to provide experience value for the tourists (Lončarić, Perišić Prodan, & Dlačić, 2017). As argued by Mathis (2013, p. 11), the tourist experience of co-creation includes the following: (1) the collaboration between the service provider and the tourist; (2) the co-production of new and improved products/services; (3) a shift away from a goods-dominant logic towards a service-dominant logic; (4) adaptability, personalisation, and uniqueness. The tourist experience co-creation can be seen as a driver of existential authenticity which in turn leads to the sense of enjoyment, escape, and experience of a 'true self' in a new place, time and culture (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Bearing in mind that visitors are searching for the objective and existential authenticity in every attribute of tourism products (culture, tradition, architecture, lifestyle, entertainment, handicrafts, and cuisine), enterprises have to incorporate authentic contents into the tourism product carefully.

Marketing capabilities. Marketing literature acknowledges that a business can either compete on its ability to sense market trends ahead of its competitors (market-driven approach or outside-in perspective) or its internal resources (resource-driven approach or inside-out perspective). Furthermore, some marketing scholars argue that 'the bundle of interrelated routines that facilitate the capacity to engage in specific marketing activities and respond to the market knowledge' (Kamboj & Rahman, 2015, p. 1041) is the central pillar of business success. Although various conceptualisations of marketing capabilities are available in the literature, they can be categorised under two broad types: the external marketing capabilities and internal marketing capabilities. The external marketing capabilities are bundles of marketing-related resources, skills and accumulated knowledge that helps a business to sense, understand, and respond promptly to the evolving requirements of customers and markets (Day, 2011) Examples of external marketing capabilities are market-sensing capability, customer-linking capability, or channel-bonding capability (Day, 2011; Mu, 2015). Internal marketing capabilities are associated with a function or practice of marketing, and these capabilities enable a firm to capitalise the full potential of market-oriented culture (Ngo & O'Cass, 2012). Enterprises analysed in this study have achieved a certain degree of balance between outside-in and inside-out perspectives. They have the ability to anticipate the future evolution of visitor needs and detect emerging opportunities based on information collected from its business ecosystem (market-sensing capability) and the ability to create intimate relationships with the customer (customer-linking capability). Moreover, they are capable of connecting with partners and leverage the resources and capabilities through formal and informal cooperation. One enterprise explained the formal cooperation and networking as follows:

> With the aim of better market positioning, the providers of services in rural tourism have formed the Eco-Pliva Association. Since many locals rent out accommodation facilities to tourists who want to feel the life in the countryside and participate in farming work, we have to cooperate. We need to exchange the knowledge and experience amongst us to keep up our businesses. [Case 2]
>
> At the same time, enterprises have developed internal marketing capabilities, particularly customer-oriented culture. Customer orientation counts among the essential characteristics of the enterprises studied. All enterprises have emphasised their devotion to establishing and maintaining high-quality relations with their customers: 'The visitor comes as a guest and leaves like our friend. This is something for what every business in rural tourism should strive for.' [Case 3]

In terms of mid-level internal marketing capabilities such as the marketing mix elements, product variety is a hallmark of all enterprises. As mentioned earlier, all enterprises are trying to customise their 'all-around' offers in order to meet visitors' needs fully. Also, they are aware that they need to set competitive prices. The combination of competitive prices and high quality of services, is a recipe for success, as most of the interviewed entrepreneurs argued. Regarding the means of communication with the market, online marketing prevails over traditional marketing. Along with having their own websites, enterprises are present in social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Instagram). Most popular distribution channels are direct contact with owners. Direct sale via Booking.com and indirect sale via travel agencies are not widely used distribution channels. One of the entrepreneurs explained its marketing channel mix as follows:

> Sales and bookings are generally made directly and through the Internet, while there is no cooperation with travel agencies. Internet and brochures, as well as travel fairs, are used for the promotion. Facebook, Booking.com and Google Maps have proven to be extremely effective promotion and sales tools, especially for foreign tourists. The interest of journalists is also high, and through media coverage, they help us to enhance the awareness of rural tourism sites. [Case 5]

This finding is in line with the view that information and communication technology (ICT) helps small tourism business in a rural area to achieve better visibility and integration into economic and tourism flows (Sedmak, Planinc, Kociper, & Planinc, 2016).

Challenges. Seasonality is perceived as a significant challenge, and it impacts the operation of small rural-based businesses in multiple ways. Since visitors generally come in the summer, the businesses have to capture as many visitors as possible during the peak summer season. Due to the limited number of rooms/beds, it is a challenging task to provide accommodation for a large number of visitors. Moreover, owners and their family members need to work long hours, resulting in unhealthy work-life balance and work-related stress. As with any other seasonal business, rural-based tourism business depends highly on the weather conditions. Unusually cold and rainy days during the summer implies that visitors will decide to go to other drier and warmer locations, resulting in lost sales for small rural-tourism businesses. Some businesses have realised that it is just a fact of (a business's) life, and they are responding on the seasonality by adding the weather-independent tourist activities. One example is quoted below.

> All the year-around we are organising workshops for homemade products. Our visitors have the opportunity to explore how our craftsmen are making 'Bolića kolo' (weaving), village bags and woollen socks. In our facility named 'The House of Fun' visitors can learn more about the distillation of the rakija (schnapps) as well as taste our famous 'Petrovačka Šljivovica' (Peter's Plum Schnapps). [Case 6]

Access to finance is another challenge faced by studied small rural-based tourism businesses. Given that these types of business have a lower bargaining power than that of the banks and other financial institutions from whom they may seek credit, they are faced with the shortage of funds for both short-run and long-run capital needs. Furthermore, interviewed owners stated that there is a lack of public sector support through the usage of conventional public financing instruments such as grant support for small rural-based tourism businesses or the subsidised loans are used.

Given its out-of-the-way location, the public infrastructure (water, electricity, transportation, etc.) and tourism infrastructure are not present, or it cannot sustain the increased number of visitors. Thus, additional investments in the quality of public and tourist infrastructure are needed for the further development of rural tourism. Two of the interviewed owners explained the problem of poor quality of infrastructure as follows:

> The only complaints we are receiving from our visitors are related to accessibility and tourist signage. Although our location is accessible by an asphalt road from the city, more road maintenance is required, especially in the winter months. Although the tourist signage is present additional improvements are needed. [Case 1]

> Our location is well connected and easily accessible. Public infrastructure and tourist signage are satisfactory. Albeit, more efforts are needed in the area of environment protection, waste management, and the reduction of pollution. [Case 4]

Another issue that hinders the success of small rural-based tourism businesses is the lack of a joint legislative framework for the management and development of rural tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the registration of rural households in Republika Srpska is regulated by the new law about catering services of the Republic of Srpska from 2017, this issue remains unresolved in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, there is a particular gap between the induced image of Bosnia and Herzegovina as an attractive rural destination and rural tourism reality. While the marketing campaign 'Enjoy Life – Bosnia & Herzegovina' highlights the beautiful nature, mountains, rivers, lakes across Bosnia and Herzegovina, it should be noted that rural tourism remains underdeveloped. The public authorities' awareness of economic opportunities offered by developing rural tourism is rather low.

Conclusion

In terms of common traits, small rural-based tourism businesses are led by active, visionary, passionate owners who can foster, nourish and support the entrepreneurial mindset amongst their family members. Like their counterparts from the rest of the world, Bosnian and Herzegovinian small rural-based tourism businesses are also developing market-sensing and customer-linking capability. Although their investments are lower than that of their counterparts in developed economies, small rural-based tourism businesses can recognise new opportunities (sensing) and generate innovations (seizing). These findings are in line with the view that 'resource-picking' and 'capability-building' are substitutes for each other in achieving business success. In other words, our findings show that a shortage of internal resources (knowledge, capital) can be substituted by the company's ability to build customer-linking and market-sensing capabilities. Self-financing ss another characteristic of studied small rural-based tourism businesses. They tend to rely on self-financing from retained profit and owner's funds. In terms of external financing, they have limited access to both public and commercial financial instruments.

What specific lessons can be derived from small rural-based tourism businesses that are doing business in the economies characterised by fragility? We have identified the following lessons that can be valuable for all small tourism businesses operating in fragile business environments (also in conjunction with research questions):

- In business environments characterised by political and economic instability, there is an urgent need for businesses that are capable of sketching their own destiny in order to survive and prosper. Product variety, the authenticity of the tourist experience, customer-linking capability, market-sensing capability, and self-financing are essential building blocks of a successful small rural-based tourism business.
- If it seems that business environment does not provide an option for sustainable growth (domestic tourists) tourism businesses should be able to recognise new opportunities on regional/global markets (market sensing) and create services/activities based on these opportunities (market seizing). Also, if one is a small player in the tourism industry, one needs to create formal and informal networks with other small tourism businesses. Thus, the saying 'If you do not like how the table is set, turn over the table' vividly explains the basic rule of the business game played by studied small rural-based tourism businesses.

The findings of the present study offer some insights for policy-makers. Although the studied small rural-tourism businesses have put enormous effort into designing and providing services/activities to meet and even exceed visitors' expectations, it seems that the owners of these businesses are making marketing decisions and solutions based on the trial-and-error method. Their marketing strategies are reactive not proactive: they respond to changes in the market instead of anticipating them. Their actions regarding marketing are mostly based on the trial-error method than sound knowledge about strategic marketing (Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning). Thus, local governments and tourism organisations ought to reinforce their know-how by designing and implementing tailored training programmes for small rural-based tourism businesses. Furthermore, local and entity governments should strategically plan the investments in public and tourism infrastructure, thereby providing necessary conditions for the lucrative operation of small rural-based tourism businesses. Moreover, issues related to the legislative framework of rural tourism (i.e., the registration of rural households) need to be solved in both entities.

Due to its exploratory nature, this study has limitations. It examined marketing practices and challenges solely from the perspective of small rural-based tourism businesses in one country. Therefore, it would be valuable to consider how the marketing practices of small rural-based tourism businesses are perceived by visitors and/or how various levels of government can support the growth of these types of businesses.

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Systems Approach to Cultural Tourism and Events

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In this paper, we will present the systems approach methodology, which has been widely used in the natural sciences and engineering for the last seven decades since Ludwig von Bertalanffy published his manifesto on general systems theory (1952) and Norbert Wiener his on cybernetics (1948). The intention of general systems theory and cybernetics is the 'ontology' of action, which is shown by feedback information. Its goal is to find a method to predict the consequence of a decision-making action. Industrial engineering recognised it when Forrester published *Industrial Dynamics* (1961), and social sciences rediscovered it with Senge's work on the learning organisation *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). Cultural tourism is an element of a complex tourism system within global and local dimensions, in which cultural events, as even smaller elements, play essential roles within the range of tourism goods and services. As a methodology for the research of complex phenomena, the systems approach will explain two of its methods, systems thinking and modelling, as those that can significantly influence decision-making when taken into account. We will show the appropriateness of the methodology within cultural tourism decision-making and modelling.

Keywords: systems approach, analytical and systems thinking, complexity, cultural tourism and events, modelling
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Introduction

The systems approach became an optimal methodology for creating solutions within engineering and the natural sciences a few decades ago. The feedback loop, which represents the circle within a system, shows that correct anticipation of the future outcome is possible only if a decision-maker observes problems in reality from a systems point of view. Such a point of view, or 'the big picture,' is a view in which all observed subjects or objects are seen as connected, interdependent, influencing each other, as is known in nature and engineering. Frequently, it is difficult to see closed connections and interdependency within social and organisational systems composed of elements (components, departments) that are nested within each other even though they are not only elements but also systems. Nesting and the difficulties of seeing boundaries among the elements make them complex systems and, as such, they need appropriate methodology to explain them, as well as solutions for their problems. Tourism and its subsystems of cultural tourism with events and all their connections, boundaries, and interdependency represent systems complexity. The systems approach, with its systems thinking and modelling methods, can survive the most rigid testing and can find systems solutions.

Analytical and Systems Thinking

A vision without systems thinking ends up painting lovely pictures of the future with no deep understanding of the forces that must be mastered to move from here to there (Senge, 1990).

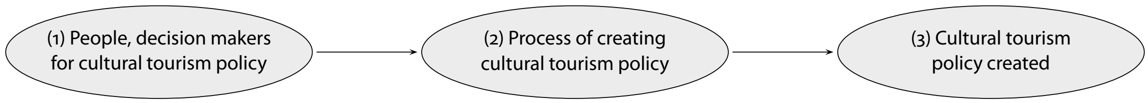

Figure 1 Model of Conventional (Linear) Thinking

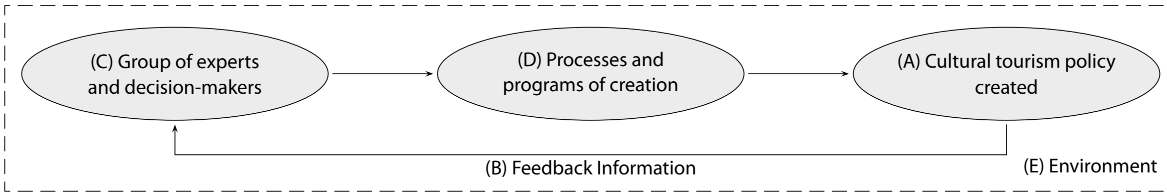

Figure 2 Systems Model of Cultural Tourism Policy

Some relevant paradigms to analysis were described by Rosenhead (1989) and Mulej et al. (1994), including soft analysis, the hard study of a system, critical thinking, strategic options development and analysis, and the dialectical theory of systems. The linear (analytical) approach is based on interpretation as a three-step thought process. It takes apart that which it seeks to understand, then attempts to explain the behaviour of the parts taken separately, and finally, and finally tries to develop an aggregate understanding of the components into an explanation of the whole.

The systems approach uses a different process. It puts the system in the context of the larger environment of which it is a part and studies the role it plays in the larger whole. The parts are no longer the primary focus. The elements are essential, but what is more important is the interrelationship between the elements as they work together to fulfil the purpose of the whole system. A systems approach is optimal for understanding interdependency, which requires a way of thinking differently than analysis; it needs systems thinking. The number of works dedicated to the systems thinking, systems models, and methodologies devoted to social, economic and natural sciences is enormous. These include System Dynamics (Forester, 1961), System Thinking (Senge, 1990; Vennix, 1996), Autopoietic System (Maturana & Varela, 1998), Living Systems (Miller, 1978), Viable Systems (Beer, 1959), Anticipatory Systems (Rosen, 1985) as well as others. Systems thinking searches for the optimal solutions and answers from right to the left, as presented with the systems model of cultural tourism policy in Figure 2.

The primary step of the system approach starts at A: the outputs or vision of the optimal cultural tourism policy. The expert group uses as fundamental questions the questions about the influence of optimal cultural tourism (outputs, A) to the environment (E – other people, nature, community), uses feedback information (B – what will cultural tourism policy bring to the E) and asks 1. What will the vision (A), outputs, organisational effectiveness, environmental effectiveness (Getz & Frisby, 1988) bring to the environment, environmental uncertainty, community context, networks complexity (E)? and 2. What is the current situation (C), inputs, ideas, teams, finances, material resources, facilities (Getz & Frisby, 1988) for achieving (A)? and 3. How can they help in the process (B) either with the help or without any worries if they cannot influence the process? To avoid the trap of the simplicity of systems thinking, one can build a simulation model of effective decision-making in which one attempts to implement the optimal systems solutions. The model helps identify the flows and uses of resources, including money and information, which are the life-blood of all events. It helps identify key stakeholders who have to be brought into decision-making (Getz, 2004). Systems evaluation helps the manager keep the 'big picture' in mind, whereas the natural tendency is to get lost in daily problem-solving.

The systems model differs from the linear model. Environment and feedback information are those parts of systems thinking and modelling that enable see-

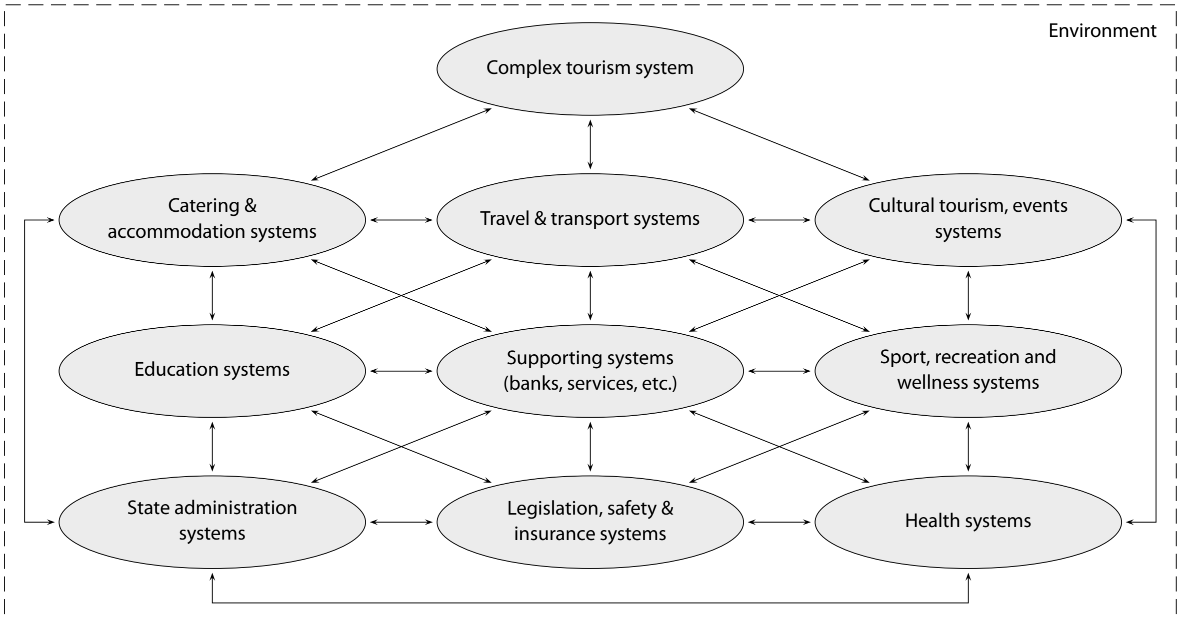

Figure 3 Interdependency of the Cultural Tourism System, Other Subsystems and the Environment

ing the 'big picture' point of view to an observer. The model's feedback information shows internal evaluation, which pertains to management's collective responsibility to ensure that all functions and programmes are meeting goals and that operations are as efficient as possible. The external evaluation covers both the organisation's linkages with other agencies and stakeholders and the impacts of its actions (Getz, 2004)

Ongoing assessment helps steer the institution, organisation, and manager towards meeting their goals. The event can always be improved, marketing enhanced, and benefits increased. Furthermore, evaluation can help avoid and suggest ways to eliminate or enhance negative consequences. Evaluation means assigning a value or worth to something, and it inherently involves subjective judgment as well as technical analysis (Getz, 2004).

The Complexity of Cultural Tourism and Events

The art of systems thinking lies in seeing through complexity to the underlying structures generating change (Senge, 1990).

In the context of tourism, we can use an expanded concept of culture. From this point of view, culture serves not only human education through the provision of music, theatre, museums, exhibitions, festivals and listed buildings, but permeates every area of human life (Dreyer, 2000). According to Adams (2008), cultural tourism is a type of special interest tourism involving leisure travel to view or experience the distinctive character of a place, its peoples, and its products or productions. The complexity of cultural tourism and events is visible since they are elements of a more extensive, tourism system. The word 'complex' is used only to indicate that the problem treated here cannot be expressed solely in hard (quantitative) relations and that most relevant values are qualitative. We consider complex systems to be networks created of many components, which interact among each other in a nonlinear manner; they may evolve through self-organisation so that they are neither completely regular nor completely random (Sayama, 2015). With a conception of complex systems, we also present a system within which the complexity of interactions among system elements plays a leading role. These elements are systems themselves and, for this reason, the behaviour of a system as a whole can hardly be predicted: the system of systems, which exchanges energy and information with its environment while in transit, inflected by internal and external influences. Organisational systems are complex because of the existing relations and nesting of its subsystems. This is represented in Figure 3.

The systems within a system of tourism nest within each other, which means that they represent subsystems at the same time that they represent systems as wholes. The interdependency and relations among the entities of these subsystems are far more critical than independent systems. This is especially seen between the subsystems of travel and transport, catering and accommodation, art and culture, sports, recreation and wellness subsystems. There are certain interdependent relationships among all subsystems, which strongly influence each other. If we map the tourism system to the local (national) or global (international destination), we reach a level of a system, which encompasses a wide variety of partners, branches and institutions. They create a complex system as such; with all interconnections, interdependency, and nesting in each other (dependent on the size of a subsystem).

General Tourism System Model

Remember, always, that everything you know, and everything everyone knows, is only a model. Get your model out there where it can be viewed. Invite others to challenge your assumptions and add their own (Meadows, 2008).

A society is a real world, which changes by altering relations among its participants as well as interactions with the environment. Tourism is often studied as an industry, alongside hospitality, with related educational programmes stressing professional career preparation. It is also a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon with all its potential impacts (Getz, 2007). Learning and experience through decision-making provide tourism development and growth that are observed through its evolution. The evolution of society and skills as part of the past and the anticipation of the future causes these systems to grow and develop with the environment as the restriction. Thus, we can say that tourism system is, as its subsystems, dynamic. Regulation is necessary but far away from being sufficient. The most important is a strategic vision of a development, and the understanding that the environment influences the prediction of the strategic vision.

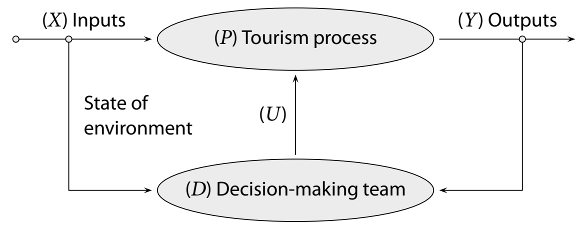

Figure 4 A General Model of Tourism as a Goal-Oriented System (adapted from Jere Jakulin & Kljajić, 2006)

For this reason, tourism systems can be defined slightly differently, so that the fundamental causes of system behaviour are emphasised. Usually, they are called 'management subsystems.' The tourism system can be described with a model, which is an idealised and simplified image of the real situation or phenomenon and contains only necessary quantities and their functional dependencies. The model is an attempt to identify critical variables in a case study and the relationship that exists among them (Kljajić, 1998).

In Figure 4, we define a general model of tourism as a goal-oriented system with a pair (P, D). P represents the managing process in the tourism system, D the managing subsystem. Loop $P \to Y \to D \to U \to P$ represents feedback information, which functions on the cause-and-effect principle; therefore, we can call it 'reactive control.' For small perturbances, such control suffices. For decision making in a tourism system, information from the environment is necessary. The chain $X \to D \to U \to P$ provides feed-forward data, which represents the anticipation of the future state of the situation. It is an essential part of the strategy of goal-oriented systems.

The inputs consist of ideas, scenarios, tangible resources, human resources, which start the process of cultural tourism policy creation and outputs, which can also include unintended and negative impacts that should be identified through research. The decision-making team plays a role in the model evaluation and consists of those experts and people who create goals and have responsibility for the system's development. The team and its capabilities make the systems work towards their balanced functioning and goals.

Building a Causal Loop Diagram Model

Modelling is a part of systems methodology, which requires more than basic knowledge of the topic one models. By modelling, we understand an activity enabling us to describe our experiences within a specific procedure (mental model) with one of the existing languages in the framework of a precise theory (Jere Jakulin & Kljajić, 2006). Model building in tourism seeks to understand a complex relationship and to aid the management of the place or process (Jafari, 2000). From a pragmatic point of view, a system is defined by the double $S = (E, R)$, where $e_i \in E \subset U = 1, 2, \ldots n$ represents the set of elements, $R \subseteq E \times E$ the relation between the elements, and the U universal set. The construction of concrete systems requires specific knowledge $K(e_i) \in E$ (property of elements) to identify the elements of the systems (including those from environments) and a theory $T(e_i, e_j) \subset R$ to find relationships among the elements. Each element e_i can be set as well as $R_j \in R, j = 1, 2, \ldots m$ defining different relations between the elements. Such a procedure is inductive and represents the model of a real system. In other words, modelling represents the activity of describing our experiences by using one of the existing languages within the framework of a specific theory such as formal concepts analysis described in (Wolff, 1999). In this way, our experiences also become accessible to others in that they may be proven, confirmed, rejected, broadened or generalised.

From a causal loop diagram, shown in Figure 5, one can derive that there is one basic circle (–) of the causal loop, which means the growth of tourists' number and borders of growth, caused by infrastructure and diminished environment attraction. In a vision of cultural tourism policy, we have to predict development as a whole to avoid limitations. If in the reinforcement circle, which consists of investments, tourism infrastructure, environment attraction, only one element starts to fall (–), this means all of the other elements will fall.

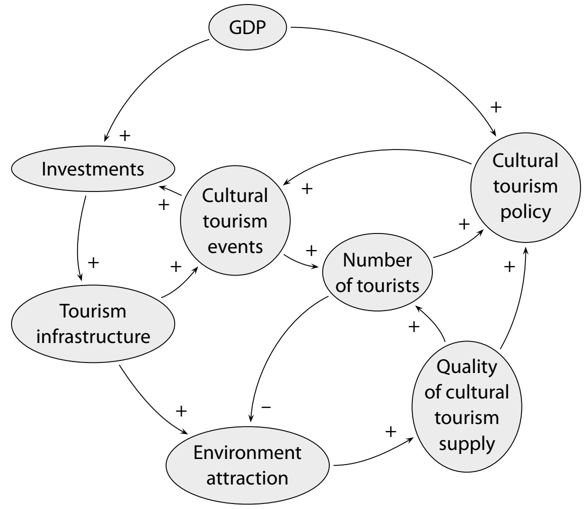

Figure 5 CLD Model of the Interdependence of Cultural Tourism Policy Elements

The above-discussed model (Figure 5) requires decision-making given by a group of experts and decision-makers who influence areas of cultural tourism. Figure 5 presents the cultural tourism expert group as a part of the cultural tourism legislative process, in which modelling and ideas about penal code determination represent a knowledge-capturing process in the form of the structure and behaviour of the model. Once the model is defined and validated, experimentation with different scenarios is possible. The cultural tourism expert group determines the set of different ideas, which represents possible future activities in the real system. The results gathered as the output of the model are evaluated with the multi-criteria evaluation function. At this stage, many different multi-criterial evaluation methods may be used, from the weighted average (Vincke, 1992) to the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), (Saaty, 2012) and Expert systems (ES) (Rajkovič & Bohanec, 1991). Information feedback provides the expert group with the possibility of creatively determining a new set of ideas on cultural tourism policy and multi-criteria evaluation functions relating to the given situation. Simulated and actual performances of the system are compared to adapt the strategy according to changes in the environment.

The systems thinking solving method with sim-

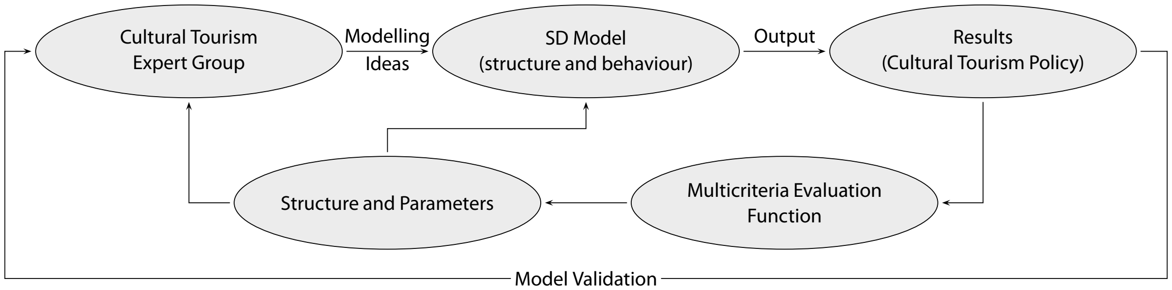

Figure 6 The Principle Scheme of Simulation Methodology for Decision-Making Support (adapted from Jere Jakulin & Kljajić, 2006)

ulation model follows standard steps: state analysis, development of causal-loop diagrams, writing of the model's equations, and model implementation. Particular scenarios that form and determine a tourist market in a particular environment are tested on a simulation system. A simulator is connected to the GSS (Group Support System). The participants using GSS work directly with the system simulator. A system simulator is connected to a database, which is necessary for simulation model activation. Simulation results are evaluated both with the group decision-making support system and with expert systems. In all of this, the understanding of the system increases. With the described model, the experimental loop on a simulation model has been finished with the help of the system simulator and scenario ranking. The elements of the decision-making support system are Powersim, a tool for the construction and use of a simulator; Ventana Group Systems, the Ventana group working support system; DEX, a shell of an expert system expert; and Expert Choice, evaluation with the AHP method. Since the work with group decision-making tool is anonymous, it raises creative thinking, which enables a higher flow of ideas and reduces unwanted influences. The participants become more relaxed since no one knows where the ideas come from and, thus, creativity is released; this would not be the case in the more conventional ways of working. The work time decreases and the efficiency of participants increases (Jere Jakulin, 2017). The final result is better, as the decision becomes a group decision with which conflict between polarised groups is minimised, and a consensus is achieved for the development of further actions.

Conclusions

The present article discusses the method of describing and modelling the complex cultural tourism system from the systems and decision-making point of view. The systems approach has become a necessity in contemporary life, which we see as a modern complex system composed of a variety of other systems and their elements. In the paper, we discussed the cultural tourism system and its elements or subsystem of travelling and transport systems, catering and accommodation systems from a systems point of view within the environment. The cultural tourism system was described as a so-called soft system phenomenon, in which people, with their actions, knowledge, and characters play the leading roles, representing a complex system of a society. As we reach a certain level of complexity, we must search for an optimal methodology to find an optimal way of dealing with this complexity. The methods of systems dynamics, systems thinking, and modelling are some of them. Therefore, the anticipated system is much closer to describing the essence of complex systems behaviour. However, the influence of the observer in the process of modelling the complex system is of primary importance. The role of the observer usually is usually played by expert groups and decision-makers who are entitled to accept decisions regarding policies in society. In literature, this problem has not been sufficiently considered.

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Original Scientific Article

Security Challenges for the Hotel Industry: Implications for Selected Hotels in Owerri, Nigeria

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This study investigates the security challenges of ten selected hotels in the metropolis of Owerri, Nigeria, and the effect on guest loyalty. A survey was conducted on 154 respondents using a structured instrument to elicit responses regarding the various physical, personnel, and system security aspects of the hotel industry. Relationships between the consequent variables were determined using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The result indicated a weak positive correlation ($r^2 = 0.270$) between security conditions and guest patronage ($p \leq 0.01$) while a weak positive correlation ($r^2 = 0.086$) was also identified between perceived guest security and the availability of informal businesses ($p \leq 0.281$) in the hotel. A lack of security collaboration among hotels located in the area, inadequate emergency exits, and poor internal security were also indicated. The study recommends a balance between the provision of adequate security and guest privacy, bearing in mind the aggravation guests may feel in the event of an invasion of privacy.

Keywords: guest loyalty, guest relations, guest satisfaction, hotel industry, hotel security
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Introduction

Security has long been recognised as a necessity for the overall growth and development of the hotel industry, both in developed and developing societies. This growing recognition has led to the commitment of most hotel enterprises towards strengthening their security systems in terms of advanced security arrangements to ensure increased confidence on the part of hotel investors, employees, and guests, who form the core elements that foster industry development. In the previous decade, the hotel industry has played a prominent role in the development of Nigeria's economy with tourism capacity building, provision for employment and cultural rebirth (Onugha, Ibem, & Aderonmu, 2016; Obiora & Nwokorie, 2018), and is regarded as one of the fastest growing sectors in Nigeria's economy, equivalent to the communications sector (Bankole, 2002; Onugha et al., 2016). This, therefore, implies that the conditions necessary for the overall sustainability of the business as a key player in Nigeria's economic growth should not be underemphasised.

However, most hotels in major cities and state capitals in Nigeria still grapple with the reality of insecure situations within the business environment in relation to emerging security trends in the tourism sector. For instance, Nwokorie (2017) wrote that while hotel security technology is moving into the cybersecurity sector, with an eye on customer data protection, physical security and awareness remain crucial to the safety of hotel guests. Even when hotels have strong security policies and procedures in place, they are still vulnerable to cyber-attacks, break-ins, theft, fraud, and other crimes. Consequently, it is vital to take precautionary measures and continually evaluate security programmes. Nwokorie, Everest, and Ojo (2014) also saw that one major problem that affects the development of the hotel industry is the unfavourable government stance concerning its lack of policy development on tourism security, which should be treated as an essential condition for the success of the hospitality business. The government, at the state level, is usually uninterested in the size of private organisations set up in relation to the provision of all-round security for such businesses, mainly because security is exclusively under the aegis of the legislative authority of the central government (Nwokorie et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, the hotel industry has been a great source of revenue to the government through value-added tax (VAT) and similar revenue collections but without the government necessarily providing most of the social services required for successful business operations (Khemani, 2001). Most hotel establishments resort to the services of private security outfits to improve guest confidence (Maranga, 2015; Cebekhulu, 2016), thus forcing an increase in the cost of hotel products and services, thereby significantly affecting the customer loyalty of the hotel industry (Nwokorie, 2016).

Again, there is an emerging trend of increased competition among hotels in Owerri as a result of concentrating hotel business in a particular location within the city. Hotels everywhere in the state's capital indicate that the business has overextended itself, resulting in too many available rooms relative to the guests' desire to rent them. The result of this business concentration is the undue attraction of security risks to the business area, which is triggered by the inevitable visibility of different types of guests, including VIPs and celebrities, who are likely to form part of the customer base of these hotels (Nwokorie et al., 2014). Hotel businesses are equally expected to improve the wellbeing of the local people through the provision of indirect employment opportunities for the local population, as part of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development practice (Nwokorie & Obiora, 2018). Judging from the perceived unemployment rate within the state, it is expected that local individuals may take undue advantage of this situation to commit crimes on unsuspecting guests within the business location (Khadka, 2014). This could compromise the reputation of the affected establishment, especially when there is a lack of security collaboration among the nearby hotel businesses (Nwokorie, et al., 2014) as is the case with the majority of hotel businesses in crime-affected areas. Specifically, Adebayo and Adebayo (2015) wrote that guest insecurity has scared tourists from visiting Maiduguri, Nigeria, over the previous decade, which led to a drastic reduction of guest patronage of small and medium hotels in the area. Similarly, Akpan (2017) determined that cult activities led to a staggering decline in the patronage of hospitality products and services, in Idah, Nigeria, in 2016 with the resultant loss of jobs that occasioned the collapse of the affected businesses.

The myriad of social challenges for the industry in Owerri has been compounded by the decline in the number of accessible roads to most hotel locations in the capital in recent times. Personal observations have proven that the condition of most of the roads linking the state's capital, through inland roads to hotel business locations with neighbouring states, have deteriorated. This situation could dampen the confidence of inbound visitors from a global point of view (Delena, 2010), thus painting a picture of a total collapse of the social system within the state capital. Also, poor accessibility to hotel locations may pose a problem for both internal and external security collaboration, as human traffic and crowd control seem to have been poorly managed.

Statement of Problem

To a large extent, security challenges facing the hotel industry could expose guests to many risks, making them dissatisfied with hotel services, and could create a high level of customer turnover, thus forcing many hotels out of business. In Owerri particularly, where over 200 hotels are presently established, the deplorable social/security situation in the last three years makes survival for the hotel businesses difficult. Specifically, most hotels struggle to remain in the business as a result of obvious security threat caused by the level of business activities within hotel premises offering direct and indirect employment to the populace. Also, the provision of indirect employment in the hotel industry for the local population has been abused and used as a ploy to commit covert crimes in the hotel, thereby worsening security situations within the business environment.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate challenges for hotels in ensuring guest security, and the effect on guest satisfaction and loyalty in selected hotel establishments in Owerri. Specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the selected hotels.
2. Identify the relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security in the selected hotels.

Research Questions

The following questions are addressed in this study:

1. What is the relationship between guest security and guest loyalty for the hotel industry?
2. What is the relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security in the hotel industry?

Study Significance

This study was conducted among selected hotels in Owerri, Nigeria, to determine the security challenges facing these hotels and their relationship with respect to overall guest satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately determines the organisational efficiency of hotel businesses. It is expected that the outcome of this study will provide insight into the security and social challenges of the hotel industry in preparing industry personnel and operators for the challenges ahead of time. The study will assist the government, at all levels, in policy formulation and implementation in the area of providing security assistance to hotels for sustainable tourism development, especially in times of civil disturbances. The hotel strategic planner will also benefit from the study in the idea of incorporation of security facilities in the scheme of the business for immediate or future business success. Researchers in hospitality development will equally benefit from this study as it will further create a new direction of how to mitigate security challenges facing the hotel industry.

Literature Review

Hotel security is a long-established concept that is instrumental to the success of the hotel business from a global perspective. Security in the hotel industry entails protection from all forms of harm, not only to hotel guests and their properties but to hotel employees and its host community at large (Groeneboom & Jones, 2003). Most assets and stakeholders of the business could be vulnerable as a result of the risks associated with it (Bharwani & Mathews, 2012). The economic implications of the business, however, pose sufficient reason for security not to be neglected (Cedric, 2011).

For the local hotel industry (Adepoju, 2017, p. 4):

> [...] the provision of sufficient employee and guest services (including security) has been challenging for hotel operators who are not adequately prepared for a turn down – whether in terms of the quality of the hotel services rendered, strong revenue management strategies or the diversification of their demand markets.

The same holds for reductions in guests' confidence even when these demands have been met (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). However, for investors who truly intend to be mid-to-long-term players, hotel security is simply part of the cycle that creates myriad investment opportunities in the hotel industry (Adepoju, 2017).

Khadka (2014) wrote that hotel employees might not even be aware of the risks that some guests may bring with them during their stay. This requires the hotel establishment to be vigilant at all times. The hotel is an aspect of the service industry in which security is an aspect of service. It is noteworthy, also, that a hotel with excellent products and service provision but inadequate security would diminish guests' safety, thus exposing them to the risks of crime and compromise the goodwill and reputation of the establishment.

Aspects of Hotel Security

Security in the hotel industry has a variety of aspects. Chakravarti (2011) identified the physical aspects of security, which is further divided into internal and external security, which deals with theft, fire hazards, lightning and escape routes, the safety of assets, unwanted visitors, and physical monitoring both inside and within the hotel premises.

The security aspect of persons identified by Nwokorie (2017) is of two parts: employees and guests, which include effective recruitment and selection, staff identification, key control, red tag system training and locker inspection for employees. For guests, baggage is supposed to be checked, guests who are suspected of stealing hotel property are supposed to be charged according to hotel policy, while guestroom security should be improved (Chakravarti, 2011; Nwokorie, 2017). The security aspect of systems in the hotel industry is as important as the first two. Chakravarti (2011) and Nwokorie (2017) identified them as including all established policies and procedures for the flow of work, which have to be followed alongside the required equipment used in carrying out operations and prescribed tasks in the various departments concerned. The security aspect of food and beverages is associated with the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) guidelines in line with local and national food hygiene regulations (Nwokorie, 2017; Chandra, 2017). Nwokorie (2017) advised that to forestall possible incidents that could lead to loss of customer goodwill for the hotel, such as rodent invasion, as well as food spoilage and poisoning, local hotels in Nigeria should be regularly inspected by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) to ensure that hotel establishments comply with prescribed food hygiene and safety standards.

Security Collaboration for Hotels

Khadka (2014) posited that the establishment or maintenance of a sufficient degree of safety and confidence of customers and employees is the aim of the work, structures, and processes known as 'security.' It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organisation. Security, as a condition, is the degree of resistance to or protection from harm. The main function of the hotel security system, according to Negi and Manoher (2011) is to safeguard guests' and employees' lives and their property and to guard the hotel's property. Moreover, the security department of the hotel is responsible for the overall security of the building, in-house guests, visitors, day users, and employees of the hotel (Khadka, 2014). The critical points for consideration in hotel security include the prevention of theft and pilferage by employees and guests, the avoidance of intentional waste by employees, and the development of emergency plans for the protection of employees and guests in the event of a civil disturbance (Negi & Manoher, 2011), as it is the moral and legal responsibility of a hotel to protect its employees, guests, and their property against threats posed by those with a conscious intent to harm them (Khadka, 2014).

Security collaborations for hotel organisations established within the same vicinity are therefore essential in this circumstance, owing to the proximity between these establishments. It is expected that guest traffic within the area would be increased at peak periods, due to increased guests' demand, which would also increase social activities and other informal guest services from the immediate external environment of the hotel industry that provide informal business services. Experience has shown when civil unrest erupted within hotel environments, and the internal security of the affected establishment lost control of the situation while waiting for state security agents to arrive, the affected hotel was at the mercy of hoodlums. In this context, security collaboration among hotels within the capital city remains vital in order to form some sort of surveillance to forestall possible civil disturbances that could hamper personnel and guest safety (Nwokorie et al., 2014). As Khadka, (2014, p. 6) put it: 'Hotel staff may not even become aware of risks that some guests may bring with them; consequently, a hotel must be vigilant at all times.' The risk to hotels within the same location can also increase because of the identity of an individual guest or his or her family. VIPs, celebrities or the infamous can present unique difficulties. Apart from the possibility of death or injury and destruction, the adverse publicity from an incident can result in ruined reputations, failing business, and detrimental effects to tourism within the state and nation at large. Tourists and hotel guests want to feel safe and secure in their temporary home (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011), and hotels have a duty to protect them since the business depends upon them (Khadka, 2014; Nwokori et al., 2014).

Risk Factors for Poor Security

Khadka (2014) and Nwokorie et al. (2014) have listed some security factors for the hotel industry: blackmail of employees, invasion of (VIP) guest privacy by locals, press, and interest groups; fraud, baggage theft, room burglary, opportunistic robbery, robbery by organised crime, kidnapping, and terrorism. The major cause is poor hotel security, which could lead to risk factors for the hotel industry including effects of tourism on the region or country, adverse publicity of the incident, destruction, injury, possible loss of life, attacks, and prolonged civil unrest (Khadka, 2014; Adebayo & Adebayo, 2015; Onugha et al., 2016; Jasinskas, Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, & Simanavicius, 2016; Akpan, 2017). However, studies have not examined and determined the impact of security aspects for the hotel industry on guest satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately determines organisational efficiency for a given establishment. For instance, during the period of this study, a local newspaper vendor and phone accessory dealer were caught pilfering fuel from a storage facility in one of the hotels within the study area. The managers imagined a situation in which the incident went unnoticed with the energy manager's intent of having sufficient gas for energy supply in the event of a power outage in the short period of operation. The result could be an unpredictable period of lack of energy supply to guest rooms and production areas until more gas was purchased to generate energy. Such a situation could lead to the loss of goodwill from guests and subsequent loss of profit for the hotel, which may lead to a gradual business collapse. Therefore, the need to ensure guest loyalty through the provision of effective security services for the guest throughout their stay is relevant.

Other Conditions for Business Success

Guest Satisfaction

Hotel guests are becoming increasingly aware of the need for satisfaction as part of expectation while choosing hotel services. This is because: 'the hotel room becomes a sanctuary for the guest while he sleeps' (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011, p. 231). On the part of hotel managers, Mitrović (2017, p. 67) asserts that 'measuring the satisfaction of visitors to the hotel is the starting point in the planning and improvement of hotel services, and relationships with guests.' Dominici and Guzzo (2010, p. 3) viewed customer satisfaction as 'a business philosophy which tends to the creation of value for customers, anticipating and managing their expectations, and demonstrating ability and responsibility to satisfy their needs.' Recent studies have determined that adequate security is significant to proper satisfaction management for the hotel guest (Pazir & Amin, 2015; Amfani-Joe, Bahagu, & Osagede, 2018; Onugha et al., 2016). This makes it imperative for hotels to understand the essence of improved guest security in order to enhance guest satisfaction.

Guest Loyalty

According to Gronholdt, Martensen, and Kristensen (2000), a significant link exists between guest satisfaction and guest loyalty. Onugha et al. (2016, p. 5797) wrote that: 'achieving customer satisfaction is a critical component of the hotel industry because improved satisfaction can lead to better customer experience and loyalty.' Rising loyalty among guests, according to Jasinskas et al. (2016, p. 562), 'allows the organization savings when decreasing marketing costs, transaction costs, and also the costs as the result of customers' decreasing change.' Guest loyalty entails the retention of existing guests to the extent of encouraging them, through quality service delivery, which includes guest security, to attract new customers for the hotel through inexpensive means, like word-of-mouth adverts (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010).

Informal Businesses

These are indirect business investments operating within hotel establishments and owned by private individuals who are not part of the hotels where the businesses operate. These businesses have a way of causing social unrest in the short run due to lack of regulation and poor security verification. Kasim (2006, p. 5) wrote that 'a destination may lose its tourist appeal if there are social problems such as the commercialization of local cultures (which lead to the lowering of that culture's authenticity), increase in crime (from drugs/alcohol abuse and prostitution) and societal antagonism,' which may arise through informal trade in the hotel sector (Okafor, Nwokorie, & Akeredolu, 2010). Examples of informal business activities include but are not limited to sales of local food products, cultural attire, artefacts, jewellery and beads, phone accessories and recharge cards, books and retails items as well as the operation of taxicabs and travel agencies. It is noteworthy that the majority of these informal business owners are between 18 and 40 years (Obiora & Nwokorie, 2018).

Methodology

Generally, the study focused on security issues and challenges facing hotels in Owerri, but with specific reference to ten selected ones. The delimitation of the scope is in recognition of security challenges of the hotel industry. In terms of respondents, customers and employees of the selected establishments were included. In investigating the behaviours and opinions of the respondents, the study used the survey method, which necessitated the use of a questionnaire (for data collection over a period of 14 months: March 2017 to April 2018) due to both the number of respondents and nature of the study. The range of the data collection was to ensure responses from the sample cut across the various business seasons within the local business period (peak and off-peak).

Population and Sample Size

The determination of the study population is based on the accessibility of respondents that granted access for questionnaire administration. In other words, the convenience sampling method was adopted, and the determination of the sample size is based on the study population comprising 131 guests and 169 customer contact hotel employees (300). It is noteworthy that both strata of the sample showed reasonable understanding of the research background and proposed items in the research instrument during FGD (Focus Group Discussion), thus necessitating the placing of their responses in the same pool. The Taro Yamane formula, as given by Yamane (1967), is applied to arrive at a sample size of 171.

Data Collection and Analyses

The questionnaire was designed in a four-point Likert scale of 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' which stand for a positive response, as well as 'disagreed' and 'strongly disagreed' which stand for a negative response. In designing the questionnaire, the researchers were cognisant of the perceived determinants of the security performance of hotels expected from guests (as observed during FGD). Other guest security-related issues in the questionnaire regarding guest satisfaction and guest loyalty were adopted from previous studies, including those of Bankole (2002), Groenenboom and Jones (2003), Nwokorie (2016), Onugha et al. (2016), Akpan, (2017), Nwokorie and Ezeibe (2016), Chauhan, Shukla, and Negi (2018), Bharwani and Mathews (2012), Nwokorie et al. (2014), Amfani-Joe et al. (2018), Hilliard and Baloglu (2008), Maranga (2015), Obiora and Nwokorie (2018), Okafor et al. (2010).

The instrument was administered to sample to be completed at their convenience. The responses were analysed in inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23) while the null hypotheses formulated for the study were tested for correlation at 0.05 level of significance (95.0% confidence interval) using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The decision rule is to accept the hypothesis if p-value $\geq$ 0.05; otherwise, the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 1 Validity and Reliability of Statistics (%)

Cronbach's α	No. of items	Result
0.967	22*	Reliable

Notes * The 18 items in the questionnaire, plus four demographic attributes of respondents not presented in Table 3.

Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated in relation to the consequent variables of the research problem to determine if relationships between these variables exist.

- H1 *There is no relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the hotel industry.*
- H2 *There is no relationship between the availability of informal businesses and perceived guest security in the hotel industry.*

Results and Discussion

Results of post-data analyses show that out of the 171 questionnaires (100% effective sample size) distributed, 154 were returned, representing a 90.1% return rate of the research instrument. The gender distribution of respondents was recorded at 55.2% (85) in favour of the male gender, while the remaining 44.8% (69) are females. All the respondents are above 18 years of age and are formally educated.

The validity and reliability test for the research instrument shows the consistency of the responses contained in the instrument. Cronbach's α value is greater than 0.8, thus suggesting a high consistency in the responses to the questions (Guilford & Benjamin, 1978) to signify that the research instrument is reliable (Table 1). Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents among the hotel establishments studied, indicating the population of guests and customer contact employees based on usable questionnaires. Customer contact employees (CCE) made up to 48.05% of the respondents, and 51.95% of the respondents are hotel guests (HG). While designing the research instrument, statements directed to either target group of the respondents or a combination of both target groups were indicated to elicit responses as appropriate, as indicated in Table 3 (n74, n80, and n154 for CCE, HG, and TSS, respectively).

Table 2 Target Groups of the Respondents

Hotel	(1)	(2)	(3)
A	5 (3.24)	7 (4.55)	12 (7.79)
B	9 (5.84)	10 (6.49)	19 (12.33)
C	7 (4.55)	6 (3.90)	13 (8.45)
D	6 (3.90)	7 (4.55)	13 (8.45)
E	7 (4.55)	7 (4.55)	14 (9.10)
F	7 (4.55)	8 (5.19)	15 (9.74)
G	9 (5.84)	10 (6.49)	19 (12.33)
H	8 (5.19)	6 (3.90)	14 (9.10)
I	10 (6.49)	10 (6.49)	20 (12.98)
J	6 (3.90)	9 (5.84)	15 (9.74)
Total	74 (48.05)	80 (51.95)	154 (100)*

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) customer contact employees, (2) hotel guests, (3) total sample size. * Insignificant decimal due to approximation (Egbulonu, 2001).

This enabled a justification of the responses, thus influencing the research outcome. Of the 18 statements in the research instrument, three (16.70) were indicated for responses by CCE, six (33.30%) were indicated for HG, and nine (50.0%) were indicated for both target groups jointly (TSS) as indicated in Table 3. As stated earlier, these statements were adopted from previous studies, and they are reliable indicators of security performances of hotel establishments.

Findings

Responses from the sample in relation to various aspects of hotel security, which are indicative of the level of provision of security services in the selected establishments, are presented in Table 3. Over 77% of respondents attested that guests' properties are kept at their owners' risk: an indication that guests may not have confidence in security within the hotel garage. Cases of car tampering within the hotel premises received a positive response of 46.4%, which is considerably high. This shows that car park security is discouraging to a large extent and may negatively affect the guest evaluation of a hotel's functional quality of its service (Jasinskas et al., 2016). Also, the issue of tampered guests' vehicles could also cast a shadow of

Table 3 Analysis of Agreement and Disagreement Responses

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Properties kept at owners' risk (n154)	77.9	22.1	3.06	0.62
2	Cases of car tampering have been recorded (n80)	63.6	36.4	2.82	0.58
3	Poor road quality affecting hotel accessibility (n80)	77.9	22.1	3.09	0.63
4	Inadequate key control (n154)	77.3	22.7	2.98	0.61
5	Provision of night lighting (n80)	21.4	78.6	1.95	0.62
6	Cases of room break-ins (n80)	66.3	33.7	2.79	0.58
7	Low guest patronage (n154)	78.0	22.0	3.11	0.64
8	Security conditions affect guests' stay (n154)	75.4	24.6	3.01	0.61
9	Current civil demonstrations affecting hotel business (n154)	70.8	29.2	2.90	0.59
10	Invasion of hotel premises by local residents (n74)	77.9	22.1	3.08	0.63
11	Availability of informal businesses (n154)	63.7	36.3	2.92	0.60
12	Invasion by rodents (n80)	75.3	24.7	2.95	0.60
13	Security collaboration among hotels in the area (n74)	14.9	85.1	1.82	0.62
14	Perceived guest security (n154)	82.5	17.5	3.21	0.66
15	Regular energy and water supply (n80)	63.7	36.3	2.85	0.59
16	Availability of internal security system (n74)	22.0	78.0	1.19	0.86
17	Availability of banking services within the hotel area (n154)	63.7	36.3	2.91	0.59
18	Availability of fire alarm and emergency exit route (n154)	36.4	63.6	2.17	0.58

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) serial number, (2) statements, (3) positive response (%), (4) negative response (%), (5) mean, (6) standard deviation.

doubt on guests' property security by the hotel. Lack of access roads to the hotel environment has a response of 77.9% to attest to the difficulty in accessing the location, while inadequate key control recorded up to 77.3% responses. Chauhan et al. (2018) indicated that emergency illness and life-threatening situations may arise, requiring rapid response from hotel authorities. Such rapid response could be hampered by poor accessibility from the hotel location.

As many as 78.6% respondents are negative on the provision of adequate night lighting outside the hotel building, which is an important safety attribute for customer choice of hotels (Hilliard & Baloglu, 2008), while 66.3% of the respondents agreed that cases of room break-ins had been recorded. Low guest patronage received 78.0% positive responses, and 75.4% of the respondents agreed that security conditions affect whether guests stay in the hotels (Table 3). Worthy of note are the studies (O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011; Mubiri; 2016), which indicated guest wellbeing and safety as encouraging guest patronage, and also a strength in the SWOT analysis of hotels.

Respondents also attested that the current civil demonstrations in the state capital were affecting the hotel business (70.8%), rodent invasions affecting guest comfort has 75.3% responses in agreement, and security collaboration among hotels in the study area has 85.1% negative responses (Table 3). Alananzeh (2017) indicated hygiene factors as having a significant impact on guest perception towards guest safety in hotels, while Chauhan et al. (2018) suggested that hotels should design a crisis management plan that would ensure coordination with local administration and security authorities to forestall emergencies. A lack of these security aspects has been identified in this study, even with the existence of informal business operators who are indirect employees of the hotel establishments, as confirmed by 63.7% of the respondents.

Table 4 H1 Correlations

Item		(1)	(2)
(1) Security conditions	(a)	1	0.270**
	(b)		0.001
	(c)	154	154
(2) Low guest patronage	(a)	0.270**	1
	(b)	0.001	
	(c)	154	154

Notes Row headings are as follows: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) significance (2-tailed), (c) *n*. ** Correlation (r^2) is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 H2 Correlations

Item		(1)	(2)
(1) Availab. of informal businesses	(a)	1	0.086
	(b)		0.281
	(c)	154	154
(2) Perceived guest security	(a)	0.086	1
	(b)	0.281	
	(c)	154	154

Notes Row headings are as follows: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) significance (2-tailed), (c) *n*. ** Correlation (r^2) is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

While 63.7% of the respondents confirmed that water and energy supplies are available, 82.5% of the responses attested that guests are not safe in the hotels studied since the availability of internal security system, access to the banking system within the hotel environment, and emergency exit routes have 22.0%, 63.7%, and 36.4% responses respectively (Table 3) which are not encouraging for guest security. Hilliard and Baloglu (2008) determined that three dimensions of security attributes are necessary for the hotel industry. These include visible security features, like fire alarms and exit routes, documentation and staff training, and general security features like backup energy supply, which are all indicated in the present study.

A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine if a relationship between security conditions and guest patronage in the hotels exists. The result shows that r^2 is statistically significant and positive at 0.270, which identifies a weak positive correlation between the variables (Table 4). The mean and standard deviation for security conditions, and low guest patronage of 3.01 and 0.61; 3.11 and 0.64, respectively, were also identified. The *p*-value for correlation is 0.001, which is less than the significance value of 0.05. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is rejected. This implies that there is a relationship between guest security and guest loyalty in the hotel industry.

For H2, a Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine whether a relationship exists between guests' perceived security and availability of informal businesses in the hotels. The result indicates that r^2 is statistically significant at 0.086, which shows a weak positive correlation between perceived guests' security and availability of informal businesses within the selected hotels. The *p*-value for correlation is 0.281, which is greater than 0.05 significance value (Table 5). The mean and the standard deviation were also identified for the availability of informal business (2.92 and 0.60, respectively) and perceived guest safety (3.21 and 0.66, respectively); therefore, hypothesis H2 is accepted. This suggests there is no relationship between guests' perceived security and the availability of informal businesses in the hotel industry. As the evidence against the null hypothesis is weak, there seems to be no guarantee of guest security from operators of informal businesses within the hotel premises.

From the result of the research, in relation to the research questions, the rejection of H1 implies an existing relationship between guest security and guest loyalty. Therefore, guest loyalty is likely if guest security is guaranteed to a reasonable extent. This implication is that hotels would maximise guest loyalty for business success if guest security is enhanced, because guests feel satisfied and offer repeat transactions where security is certain. Conversely, accepting H2 entails that the availability of informal businesses in the hotel premises is not an assurance to the security of guests' properties, as informal business operators could be a threat to hotel security. The relationship between the availability of informal businesses and guest security is not mutual due to the threat posed to hotels' and guests' properties by informal business operators.

Conclusion

This study was aimed to investigate the various security challenges of the hotel industry in Owerri, Nigeria, with particular reference to the impact on overall guest safety and guest loyalty. The study was able to justify the intent with various findings to validate that guest security in the study area is at its low ebb. The study observed that vehicles parked within hotel premises are entirely vulnerable to theft. Even though hotel establishments have no (legal) mandate to provide guest vehicle security, incidents of vehicle tampering recorded within hotel premises could be enough to diminish the hotel's goodwill to a large extent.

Reactions from respondents also confirmed cases of room break-ins in the establishments studied, which may be occasioned by poor internal security. Since the hotel premises are being invaded by local residents (in-form of informal guest service providers), cases of this nature cannot be entirely avoided. Rodent invasion, as indicated in the study, is another critical security risk that may unknowingly affect food safety and, consequently, guests' health. Inadequate night lighting is an indicated security aspect that gives rise to similar vicious security situations.

The deplorable nature of roads leading to the hotels is a major guest security impediment, especially in terms of emergencies and external security collaboration. These situations are contributors to the customer decision process while making destination choice; they may significantly hinder the growth of the tourism industry in the state in the near future.

Correlation analyses identified a relationship between guest security and guest loyalty, as the study indicated that security conditions affect guest loyalty. Similarly, the study also identified that the availability of informal businesses does not guarantee guest security. This could be because the informal business operators are not direct employees of the hotel; their commitment to guests in terms of security is not sacrosanct.

Previous studies (Jasinskas et al., 2016; Chauhan et al., 2018; Hilliard & Baloglo, 2008; O'Fallon & Rutherford, 2011; Mubiri, 2016; Alananzeh, 2017) identified security risks as unfavourable to business success in the hotel industry as it concerns guest satisfaction and loyalty. This could be brought about by a neglect of the various physical features, persons, and the system security aspects indicated in this study.

For first-time guests in the hotel, poor security could undermine their satisfaction level and the chances of the hotel getting repeat business from them even though they have no previous experience with the hotel (Högnäs, 2015). The negative impact of a poor first impression could be damaging to the service quality of a hotel, as identified in previous studies (Högnäs, 2015; Amelia & Garg, 2016). It should be understood that poor security could affect the guest's first impression, as Högnäs (2015, p. 8) wrote: 'the first impression of a hotel experience is affected by many things such as surroundings, interior, and employees,' and that 'previous experiences and expectations also affect the total perceived service quality' (p. 13).

Limitations

The findings of this study may not be summarised as a general situation obtainable in most state capitals in the country. This is due, mainly, to inadequate available local literature to compare hotel security situations in most major cities in the country to a larger extent. Further research could be necessitated, especially in regions where security conditions seem to have either improved or deteriorated further.

Recommendation

From the findings of this study, hotels should review their guest vehicle parking policy to accommodate the interest of both parties, bearing in mind the confidence reposed in the hotel by the guest. Absolute security of guests' vehicle could be achieved by enhancing security at the car park area, providing vehicle parking tags, and adequate night lighting as necessitated by contemporary security situations that require due diligence.

Hotel security goes beyond the installation of the latest surveillance equipment. Staff should be made to undergo regular training on the usage of these devices to regularly ensure guest satisfaction and be reminded that guest privacy is also important both in the service encounter and security mix.

Hotels should thrive to ensure a balance between guest privacy and security while providing lighting and various security arrangements, bearing in mind the aggravation customers may feel in the event of privacy invasion. Therefore, night lighting outside the hotel building should be adequate to discourage suspicious movements during late hours. However, caution should be applied, so that night lighting is not reflected into guest rooms unnecessarily by providing quality curtain materials.

To meet guest expectations and enhance guest loyalty, hotels should create a sustainable feedback mechanism to obtain information from guests to enable them to understand the feeling of first time guests (especially), in order to understand and capture their perception of initial and overall service quality including hotel security, and fulfil them for a repeat business.

Security collaboration among hotels located within the same vicinity is essential to prevent coordinated theft that could arise, especially during festive periods. It is easier for a hotel security system to manage crisis situations and or send an early report to police authorities for rapid response against crimes if intelligence is received promptly from the nearby hotel establishment of an imminent attack by hoodlums.

Hotel business operators should consider extending hospitality business development to other parts of the state, rather than concentrating the business in a particular cluster of the state capital. This would help in spreading hospitality-related businesses to other areas and also minimise the security threat that may arise as a result of huge guest traffic generated during peak periods in locations with a large number of hotels.

The government also has an enormous role to play for tourism to grow. While it is expected that government should improve security around business establishments who pay tax for the purpose, effort should also be put in place by the government to construct and maintain access roads to hotel establishments in order to enhance the capacity of these hotels to attract inbound tourists and other business investors.

Regular inspection should be enforced by regulatory agencies in the hotel industry in order to check that hotels maintain standards in all aspects of security (physical, food and beverage, persons, and systems).

Though informal businesses could assist hotel establishments in meeting guests' ongoing needs, hotels should ensure prescribed registration for informal business operators both with the hotel and affiliate professional associations prior to the commencement of business so that the operators would understand they are part of the business' success and they should protect guests' interest as much as the hotels do.

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Instruments for Sustainable Tourism Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Sustainable tourism development is based on ecological sustainability, ways of using renewable and non-renewable resources, and socio-cultural and economic sustainability. Stakeholders of the tourism sector have an important role in tourism development, in which the public represents one of the critical segments of sustainable tourism development. This paper aims to analyse and determine the most effective way of sustainable tourism development for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Understanding different approaches to tourism development and their inclusion in the process can significantly increase the sustainability of future tourism development. The research was conducted as a population survey on the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The sample size was appropriate, based on the total population and included more than 385 respondents of different demographic categories. The main hypothesis of this paper emphasises that citizens' education about the significance of the concept of sustainable tourism represents a fundamental approach for the further development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The analysis of the approach to sustainable tourism development has shown that most respondents consider the reduction of environmental pollution as the most critical instrument for sustainable tourism development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also emphasise the importance of providing the active participation of all stakeholders in the creation of tourism products, with a particular emphasis on local governments. In accordance with the obtained research results, it was concluded that the main hypothesis was not confirmed.

Keywords: sustainable development, economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability, ecological sustainability, cultural heritage
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Introduction

Today, the sustainable tourism concept is considered to be a crucial link to the economic growth and development of a country. Mihalic (2016) concludes that the concept of responsible tourism is gaining increasing attention from scholars in the tourism domain. Accordingly, we can confirm the existence of many definitions that put social equity and environmental quality into their focus. Pearce, Markandya, and Barbier (1991) list more than twenty definitions of sustainable tourism. The term 'sustainable tourism' was first defined by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 1996: 'Tourism that leads to the management of all areas, in such a way that the economic, social and environmental needs are fulfilled by cultural integration, ecological processes, biodiversity and support for the development of society' (Fennel, 2003). UNWTO also specifies that sustainable tourism considers the needs of current tourists as well as the needs of future generations. Buckley (2009) lists the most important activities that characterise sustainable tourism:

- optimal usage of natural resources, adequate management of environmental processes, and efforts to preserve biodiversity;
- respecting the socio-cultural attitudes of the local community, preserving cultural and traditional values, as well as undertaking activities in the field of intercultural understanding and tolerance;
- providing real and long-lasting economic processes that would enable the growth of the welfare of society, employment stabilisation, and opportunities to earn income;
- the long-term success of tourism depends on whether the tourism sector is able to manage and reconcile economic, social and environmental aspects, which, at the same time, represent the dimensions of sustainable development.

The underlying assumptions of sustainable tourism are precisely formulated in international documents, such as the Charter for Sustainable Tourism (see http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/charter.html) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (see http://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria).

Vehbi (2012) mentioned that sustainability as a concept stands for long term economic, environmental, and community health. Wearing and Nail (2012) define the dimensions of sustainable tourism development in the following way: ecological dimension – environmental quality and natural resources quality create the level of attractiveness of the place for tourists. Therefore, any activity that affects the environment or natural resources, in the long run, aggravates attractiveness from the point of view of tourists, which leads to fewer visitors and less income from tourists. Socio-cultural dimension – the social and cultural heritage of a region have a crucial role in tourism, especially in regions with particularly rich cultural and artistic heritage, or places where local tradition and values have a meaningful role. In these places, tourism can significantly contribute to creating new jobs, protecting cultural heritage, but it can also contribute to the dependence of these regions on foreign companies and tourist operators. Economic dimension – refers to the financial aspects of tourism activities that are reflected in the profit achievement, respecting the principles of the sustainable development concept. If we do not comply with the concept of sustainable development and do not consider the ecological and socio-cultural dimension, the results of future projections can distort the picture and lead to inappropriate planning.

Furthermore, sustainable tourism should (UNWTO, 2017):

- optimally use ecological resources that are a crucial element in the development of tourism, as well as maintain basic ecological processes and contribute to the preservation of natural and biological diversity;
- respect the socio-cultural authenticity of the local community, preserves its material and cultural heritage, traditional values and contributes to intercultural understanding and tolerance;
- preserve the vital and long-term goals of economic and business growth, providing socio-economic benefits for all interested parties, employment, income and social services for the local community and contributing to poverty reduction.

Huang (2011) found that non-conventional methods of assessing tourism sustainability failed to provide reliable results. To fill this gap, numerous activities have been undertaken to develop a relatively comprehensive and logical assessment methodology (Reihanian, Hin, Kahrom, & Mahmood, 2015; Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Some critical reasons call for an urgent assessment of the sustainability of tourism. Very poor ecological settings and cultural sensitivity of the sites call for the consistent monitoring and evaluation of the impact of tourism. In addition, the dynamic, unstable and unpredictable nature of the industry encourages the consistent implementation of the assessment and tracking progress towards sustainable tourism development (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019).

Many tools can be used to assess the sustainable development of tourism. As one of the most widely accepted assessment tools, we indicate indicators or instruments of sustainability because they are both considered relatively reliable and easy to apply, and they contain qualitative and quantitative data. However, the absence of well-developed sustainability indicators greatly influences the adequacy of tourism sustainability assessments (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). Nevertheless, Reihanian et al. (2015) propose several instruments that can adequately assess the development of sustainable tourism, especially emphasising the systematic organisation and measurement of indicators, based on which the state can make adequate conclusions and decisions for the sustainable development of tourism.

It is necessary to note that most of the studies carried out on the topic of tourism sustainability assessment applied positively and negatively expressed indicators (Cottrell, Vaske, & Roemer, 2013; Ayazlar & Ayazlar, 2016). Thus, indicators/instruments provide an insight into the state of development of sustainable tourism, or its particular aspect, at a given point in time, but this cannot be a final assessment of the state of the given occurrence. Therefore, indicators measure information that can enable the authorities to reduce the chances of making bad decisions unconsciously (Jovičić, 2014).

Sustainable tourism is highly dependent on its ability to increase financial benefits, including the ability to maintain social, cultural, and ecological heritage (Janusz & Bajdor, 2013). The concept of sustainable development has led to numerous controversies. The approaches are different: from those who see it as the only acceptable concept of future development to those who accept it as a theoretically conceived conception and philosophical paradigm but dispute its applicability in practice. The concept of sustainable development is directly related to the improvement of the quality of the tourist destination. The preserved natural environment, cultural-historical heritage, positive relation of inhabitants towards tourists, cultural identity – those are the elements of the quality of a tourist destination, for which sustainable development stands. In this way, a positive interaction between tourism and the environment is created. Tourism brings revenue and part of it is invested in improving the quality of the environment. The preserved environment is an essential element of the tourist attraction of the destination.

Sustainable tourism development should maximise the benefits of tourism and, at the same time, minimise damage or costs and direct and limit tourism development in line with the requirements of sustainable tourism development. We can observe that the concept of sustainable development is based on the principle of intergenerational equity and that sustainable development requires harmonisation between economic growth, social justice, and a healthy environment. The violation of this principle causes environmental damage, which, although done today, is shifted to the next generation, endangering economic development and the development of tourism.

The population of a local community, region, entity, or country represents one of the most critical stakeholders in sustainable tourism development. If the population is not involved in the decision-making process, then the development process does not have a great chance to succeed in the long run. They will take a negative attitude about both existing and future tourism development. This paper aims to determine the perceptions of the population towards the development of tourism in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the perspective of sustainability. The research in the work was carried out based on the scientific method of deduction and analysis for the interpretation of secondary data sources, and the primary research was carried out based on the descriptive statistical analysis method. Secondary data were collected from official reports of tourist organisations, scientific works of experts in the field of sustainable tourism and relevant websites. Also, we obtained a list of sustainability indicators from an extended literature review and interviews with some key informants, with a particular emphasis on the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS).

Literature Review

In recent years, sustainable development and sustainable tourism development have become a very important subject of numerous research papers around the world. Sustainability has become a significant link of tourism development, especially for tourist destinations, because the environment and its quality are an essential segment of tourist attraction (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Butler, 1999; Garrod & Fyall, 1998; Stabler & Goodall, 1997; Inskeep, 1991; Wahab & Pigram, 1997; Hudson & Miller, 2005; Lynn & Brown, 2003; Ross & Wall, 1999). The primary aim of sustainable tourism development is to provide economic benefits, to maximise visitors' satisfaction, to protect the environment and improve the quality of life of the population of the relevant destination (Akis, Peristianis, & Warner, 1996; Aronsson, 2000; Bramwell et al., 1998; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; McIntyre, 1993; Mowforthand & Munt, 2003).

Sustainable tourism development greatly facilitates and accelerates local economic development, environmental protection, as well as cultural heritage, as confirmed in numerous international resolutions and agreements (*Carta di Rimini per il turismo sostenibile,* 2001; European Commission, 2000, 2006, 2007; UNWTO, 1995). Also, it should be emphasised that the real effect of sustainable tourism can only be achieved if local communities and the state truly understand that sustainable tourism development greatly contributes to the improvement of social well-being (Hanafiah, Azman, Jamaluddin, & Aminuddin, 2016).

Neto (2003) and many other authors (Godde, Price, & Zimmermann, 2000; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001; Wells, 1997), confirmed the positive correlation of sustainable tourism and local development, which makes it clear how vital sustainable tourism is for the local and regional development and the whole economy.

Indicators and standards for sustainable tourism development have been proposed by several organisations. In 1995, for example, the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) launched a five-year programme to create sustainability indicators. However, the indicators obtained were focused on the global (not local) and environmental (not cultural, economic, or institutional) dimension of sustainability (Cottrell, Vaske, & Shen, 2007; Cottrell, Vaske, Shen & Ritter, 2007).

UNWTO has also produced 11 key indicators for sustainable tourism, which are divided into four categories: ecological, social, economic, and planning (Cottrell et al., 2013).

The European Commission launched the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) in 2013 to help destinations to monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performance by using a common comparable approach. The ETIS was based on 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators, subdivided into four categories: destination management, social, and cultural impact, economic value, environmental impact (the list indicators can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators/index_en.htm). Choi and Sirakaya (2006) also proposed six dimensions for measuring the sustainability of community-based tourism: political, social, ecological, economic, technological, and cultural indicators.

Kim, Uysal, and Sirgy (2013) believed that the perception of the well-being of the inhabitants under tourism can influence the development, and tourism policy and planning. Consequently, well-being can be used as an indicator of testing the perceptions of residents for encouraging the development of tourism. Woo, Kim, and Uysal (2015) say the population feels that life satisfaction is a key indicator for supporting sustainable tourism development. To achieve the sustainable development of community-based tourism, the population should be provided with life satisfaction sustainability such as material, emotional, health and safety, and well-being.

In their paper, Edington and Edington (1986) analysed and confirmed the impact of tourism on the environment, culture, and social and economic conditions; tourism also relies heavily on the natural and socio-cultural environment. Gratton and Van der Straaten (1994) also stated that sustainable tourism development is only possible when environmental capacities are not endangered.

Sustainable tourism is becoming increasingly relevant for other forms of tourism, regardless of scope, including mass tourism, which implies the fact that the concept of sustainable tourism brings together social, cultural, economic, and political alongside environmental issues (Bramwell, Higham, Lane, & Miller, 2017). In recent years, some critical issues in sustainable tourism have changed. For example, it has been found that research and policies within sustainable tourism are too focused on the behaviour of individuals, rather than considering the broader social relationships and structures, institutional rules, and other factors. (Nunkoo, 2017; Bramwell et al., 2017; Hall, 2013).

According to Choi and Sirakaya (2005), any form of tourism development can be sustainable, but only if the population is the focal point of the mentioned development. The population attitudes are the basis for successful sustainable tourism development. Gursoy, Chi, and Dyer (2010) concluded that the population aspires to have positive attitudes towards the concept of sustainable tourism because they see tourism as a tool for economic development.

Perceptions of population can be influenced by demographic factors – age, gender, education, and years of residence (Vargas-Sánchez, Plaza-Mejia, & Porras-Bueno, 2009), community attachment (Lee, 2013), tourism planning, environmental sustainability (Choi & Murray, 2010), the state of the local economy (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002), and the stage of tourism development (Lundberg, 2015; Hunt & Stronza, 2014). Populations with positive perceptions will become major stakeholders in tourism planning and management (Lee & Hsieh, 2016).

Methodology

The empirical research results, as the most important part, will be processed by descriptive statistical methods, as well as appropriate tests to compare variables within each dimension. These statistical methods will be particularly useful in the presentation of survey results, for which the demographic impact on individual decisions, perceptions and preferences will be processed. The questionnaire, as the main segment of this research, consists of:

- demographic data of respondents (gender, age, education, employment);
- an open question of the eight instruments of sustainable tourism development that could best be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A Likert scale for measuring the value of attitudes with five responses provided, which are coded in numbers from one to five will be used to evaluate the attitudes of the respondents. The questionnaire will consist of open and closed questions, meaning statements with offered responses (or without intensity-yes/no answers) and statements without an offered response. The questionnaire will be implemented in written and electronic form in two ways: individual and by post (or e-mail). The survey aims to analyse and implement the concept of sustainable tourism development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The population (basic set) in this survey are residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina who, according to the available official data of the Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, number 3,531,159 (data for 2013). The sample will be probabilistic and will be chosen by a simple random method, assuming a normal pattern of the sample and population (the sample is $n > 30$, and the probability of each unit's choice is the same). Of course, such a choice will include all demographic categories of respondents who differ by gender, age, education, income. A sample that has attributes of impartiality, representativeness and economy is calculated according to the formula for calculating the minimum sample size:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{c^2} = \frac{1.96^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 384.16.$$

For the 95% level of reliability $Z = 1.96$, reliability interval (c) ± 5%, population estimation in B&H of 3,531,159, response rate of (p) 50%. This led to a sample of 385 respondents. The sample rate (step) is $R = N/n = 2227970/385 = 5786.93$. The rate of choice or coverage

Table 1 Statistical Analysis of Sustainable Tourism Instruments that Could be Applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Instruments	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Education of citizens about the importance of sustainable tourism	3.71	1.043	28.11
(2) Reduction of environmental pollution	4.02	1.020	25.37
(3) Maintaining natural and cultural heritage	4.09	0.963	23.54
(4) Improving tourism management	4.02	0.971	24.15
(5) Establish an integrated natural resource management system	3.91	0.928	23.73
(6) Enable the public-private partnership model	3.85	0.963	25.01
(7) Ensure active participation of all stakeholders, especially local communities, in the creation of tourism products	4.06	0.886	21.82
(8) Complete integration of the term sustainable tourism into strategic planning	3.88	0.955	24.61
Average	3.94	0.966	24.52

Notes Column headings are as follows: (1) mean, (2) standard deviation, (3) coefficient of variation.

Table 2 Comparison of Respondents by Gender

Item		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Mean Rank	Male	190.32	180.62	181.19	188.36	189.91	204.41	190.82	196.53
	Female	194.39	202.16	201.16	196.44	195.29	184.43	194.62	190.38
Mann-Whitney U test		17683.00	16097.00	16185.50	17361.50	17615.00	16251.00	17764.00	17542.50
Wilcoxon W		31213.00	29627.00	29715.50	30891.50	31145.00	40782.00	31294.00	42073.50
Z		−0.42	−1.98	−1.91	−0.75	−0.50	−1.82	−0.35	−0.56
Asymp. significance (2-tailed)		0.67	0.05	0.06	0.46	0.62	0.07	0.73	0.57

Notes For column headings see instruments in Table 1.

of the sample by the population is $f = n/N = 0.00017 < 0.05$ ($n > 30$).

Since a large amount of data on indicators relevant to sustainable tourism has been collected and analysed, a statistical method from general scientific methods will be used. The technique to be used in this research will be primarily cabinet or 'desk' research. An insight into the available literature in the field of research subjects (books, articles in scientific journals, collections from scientific conferences, electronic sources, etc.) will be done. The collected data were analysed using SPSS software. Data analysis using this software will consist of descriptive statistical methods (arithmetic mean, frequencies, standard deviation, correlation coefficient), as well as appropriate inferential statistical analyses (Mann-Whitney's U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test).

Research Results

The method of descriptive statistics was used to cover the generalities of respondents such as gender, age and education. A total of 385 people were tested. In the total sample, there were many females, but this is not significant for the purpose of the research. Of the total number of female respondents, there were 221 (57.4%) female and 164 males (42.6%).

Regarding age structure, the highest percentage of respondents is from 18 to 30 years old (61%), followed by subjects aged 31 to 40 (24.20%), 41 to 51 years (9.4%) and respondents over 51 years (5+.5%). The survey included 191 persons with high school diploma, then 163 with bachelor's degrees, 30 master's degrees, and one doctor of science.

In the opinion of the population, the highest rating received an instrument that refers to the mainte-

Table 3 Comparison of Respondents by Age

Item		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Mean Rank	18–30	192.11	193.33	193.19	191.69	190.08	185.06	189.31	188.83
	31–40	200.00	192.08	204.39	200.69	200.54	209.69	205.59	212.74
	41–50	192.25	206.28	165.10	184.63	192.26	196.93	174.75	175.85
	50+	168.10	170.67	188.21	187.98	193.55	201.17	209.76	181.64
Chi-Square		1.58	1.53	3.72	0.81	0.66	3.81	3.26	4.79
Degrees of freedom		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. significance		0.66	0.68	0.29	0.85	0.88	0.28	0.35	0.19

Notes For column headings see instruments in Table 1.

Table 4 Comparison of Respondents by Education

Item		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Mean Rank	High Sch.	190.30	190.22	183.06	181.26	183.14	174.05	184.10	180.52
	BCh	201.71	193.93	199.57	202.94	205.46	212.49	202.96	207.02
	MSc	166.00	206.45	221.73	214.40	187.98	207.42	196.23	200.17
	PhD	100.00	169.50	159.00	172.00	194.50	203.00	172.00	78.00
Chi-Square		3.89	0.69	4.75	5.12	4.04	12.22	2.91	6.84
Degrees of freedom		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. significance		0.27	0.88	0.19	0.16	0.26	0.01	0.41	0.08

Notes For column headings see instruments in Table 1.

nance of natural and cultural heritage (4.09), followed by the instrument of inclusion of all stakeholders in the creation of tourism products (4.06). There are two instruments with ratings above 4: the reduction of pollution and the improvement of tourism management. The average deviation from the average rating is 0.966. The dispersion of the opinion of the respondents about the instruments is moderate (coefficients of variation amount to between 21% and 28%). Non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney's U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test) will be used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between demographic groups, in the direction of instruments of sustainable tourism development can be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Based on the test results shown in Table 2, conclusions about the attitudes of men and women towards the instruments of sustainable tourism development can be drawn:

- there is no statistically significant difference in attitudes between men and women, except on the second instrument about reducing pollution of the environment, where the difference is statistically significant $p = 0.047 < 0.05$;
- as shown in the average of the ranking of instruments, six of the eight instruments women, unlike men, considers more important.

Based on the results shown in Table 3, it can be concluded that:

- there is no statistically significant difference between respondents in relation to their age because all values are $p > 0.05$;
- respondents aged 31–40 years, unlike the other age groups, consider certain instruments of sustainable tourism development more important than the other age groups do;
- respondents aged 41–50 years, unlike the others,

consider the reduction of pollution more important, while respondents above 50 years old consider the participation of all stakeholders in creating a sustainable tourism product to be the most important.

Based on the results shown in Table 4, it can be concluded that:

- there is no statistically significant difference between respondents in relation to their education, except on the sixth instrument (enabling the public-private partnership model) for which $p = 0.007 < 0.05$;
- respondents with a university degree, unlike those who are categorised in the other education groups, give greater importance to certain instruments of sustainable tourism development;
- respondents with a master's degree, unlike the others, consider reducing pollution of the environment, maintaining natural and cultural heritage, and improving tourism management to be more important.

Conclusion

It is necessary to emphasise that this work is not comprehensive. Despite the contribution of this paper, which mainly refers to extending the knowledge of sustainable tourism development and makes a significant contribution to relevant literature, it has several limitations that need to be considered for future research on the assessment of tourism sustainability. The population perceptions were measured based on three dimensions (economic, socio-cultural, and environmental). To overcome this shortcoming, it is necessary to include some additional dimensions and their respective indicators such as technological sustainability, infrastructural sustainability, information, communication technology, and stakeholder collaboration. In this paper, the emphasis was placed on perceptions of local residents using a survey conducted during one year. Consequently, future research should have a long-term qualitative approach (in-depth interviews, focus groups, participative observations and ethnography). Also, this study was conducted when B&H was in a politically instable time and, thus, the perception of respondents might be negatively affected.

Based on the obtained results of this empirical research, the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina has shown positive perceptions towards sustainable tourism development. All instruments of sustainable tourism development were rated with a high rating. That means that the respondents do not have an undecided attitude about their application. A priority is given to the maintenance of natural and cultural resources, as the main impetus for the implementation of sustainable tourism. Also, it can be concluded that all the population groups possess certain knowledge about sustainable development and the ways it can be applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the future development of sustainable tourism in B&H, it is necessary to actively implement all principles of sustainable development in the ecological (preservation and protection of natural resources), the socio-cultural (protection of cultural and historical material and intangible heritage), and the economic principles of sustainable development. The economic principles of sustainable tourism development in B&H are easier to accomplish in big cities (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar), where there is a broad range of tourism services and facilities, and attractiveness is based largely on cultural and historical heritage.

It is vital that the future conceptualisation of sustainable tourism issues involves local communities and the public sector. If the public sector does not implement training activities and a sustainable development policy, it is difficult to expect the interest and active role of other stakeholders in the realisation of sustainable development. If the population does not recognise the benefits that a sustainable development policy will bring, the public sector and its policy will not have the support of the population.

B&H chronically faces the problem of a lack of quality tourism development strategies. Perhaps the biggest problem that B&H faces in terms of developing development strategies is the lack of understanding of the importance of long-term planning. Specifically, long-term planning implies a period of over ten years and is still rarely used in development strategies in B&H. The lack of a long-term vision of development can prevent the implementation of the same. We emphasise that the sustainable development of tourism relies on a long-term perspective, and therefore requires a strategy that covers a period of more than ten years. Consequently, we can conclude that in B&H exist a problem of implementing the principles of sustainable tourism, both at the level of state administration and the level of local self-government.

The positive attitude of the population towards tourism development has key importance for the sustainability of tourism in this area. To guarantee the complete success of tourism development and its sustainability, it is necessary to invest in natural and cultural heritage, to ensure the active participation of all participants in the creation of tourism product and to continuously work on the education of human resources in tourism. Accordingly, the authorities responsible for the development of tourism and its planners should further devote themselves to the development of strategies and action plans for the implementation of instruments for sustainable tourism development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Tradicionalne prireditve v severni Istri v smislu avtentičnosti in (dis)kontinuitete

Katja Hrobat Virloget in Petra Kavrečič

Pričujoči prispevek je nastal kot rezultat raziskave, ki je potekala v okviru projekta Turizmo Ištriano (Program LAS Istre). Cilj raziskave je bila etnološka študija nesnovne dediščine severne Istre, pri čemer je bila osrednja pozornost namenjena tradicionalnim praznikom. V okviru raziskave sva se odločili za drugačen metodološki pristop, ki se namesto turistične valorizacije »od zgoraj« zanima, kako ljudje dojemajo nesnovno dediščino in kako (morebitno) turistično promocijo šager vidijo domačini. So turisti na šagrah sploh dobrodošli? Ali so te prireditve večinoma namenjene lokalnemu prebivalstvu? Obenem so se pojavila vprašanja kot: Katere prireditve imajo potencialni turistični interes in želijo privabiti (tuje) turiste? Lahko na območju severne Istre zasledimo prireditve, ki bi bile turistično zanimive? Je to značilneje za novodobne, nedavno »izumljene« prireditve/praznike ali tudi za »tradicionalne«? Ti razmisleki so odprli nova vprašanja o tako imenovani »avtentičnosti« in kontinuiteti oziroma diskontinuiteti nesnovne dediščine v severni Istri, kar do sedaj še ni bilo deležno znanstvene obravnave. Raziskava je temeljila na etnografski metodi. Intervjuji so potekali s prebivalci ruralnih območij, starejšimi od 60 let. Zanimalo naju je predvsem, kako domačini doživljajo tradicionalne praznike, kaj jim je oziroma ni všeč in kako dojemajo spremembe. Drugi del raziskave je temeljil na antropološki metodi opazovanja z udeležbo, kjer smo opazovali devet praznikov, ki so potekali leta 2019. Na prireditvah so potekali tudi intervjuji z obiskovalci in organizatorji.

Ključne besede: pogostitve, šagra, tradicija, (dis)kontinuiteta, severna Istra
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 109–120

Temačne prireditve istrskega podeželja: pogled elektronskih medijev

Metod Šuligoj

Ta pilotna raziskava osvetljuje povezavo in odsev preteklih travmatičnih dogodkov v sodobnih temačnih prireditvah. Namen raziskave je zagotoviti osnovno razumevanje, kaj pomenijo temačne prireditve in temačni turizem v specifičnem regionalnem okolju – na podeželju čezmejnega območja Istre. Posledično je bila s pomočjo kvantitativne vsebinske analize identificirana medijsko konstruirana družbena resničnost, povezana s temačnimi prireditvami; v iskanju odgovorov na tri raziskovalna vprašanja so bile uporabljene navzkrižne tabele in deskriptivna analiza. Ugotovljeno je bilo, da na vseh območjih istrskega podeželja prevladujejo spominske prireditve (komemoracije), povezane z drugo svetovno vojno; temačne prireditve so se po navedbah medijev odvile večinoma ob spomenikih ali prizoriščih tragičnih dogodkov – večina jih je bila v majhnih istrskih mestih. Polaganje cvetja in (bogatejši) kulturni program sta pomemben element istrskih temačnih prireditev na vseh območjih. Ni pa statistično pomembne povezave med vrsto dogodkov in različnimi podeželskimi območji. Glede na ugotovitve smo zdaj (vsaj v osnovi) seznanjeni s sedanjimi istrskimi temačnimi prireditvami, ki ponujajo idealno osnovo za razvoj temačnega turizma v najrazvitejši turistični regiji Slovenije in Hrvaške.

Ključne besede: temačne prireditve, temačni turizem, tematski turizem, zgodovina Istre, podeželje, mediji
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 121–132

Analiza učinkovitosti prehrambnih obratov v ruralnem okolju: primer Slovenije

Tanja Planinc in Marko Kukanja

Pričujoči prispevek analizira učinkovitost restavracij, ki delujejo na slovenskem podeželju. V vzorec je bilo zajetih 52 restavracij, ki delujejo neodvisno in v komercialne namene. Del podatkov je bil pridobljen preko Agencije Republike Slovenije za javnopravne evidence in storitve, del podatkov pa na terenu. Na podlagi priložnostnega vzorčenja so bile v raziskavo zajete samo tiste restavracije, ki prihodke dosegajo izključno iz naslova prehrambne dejavnosti. Učinkovitost je bila analizirana na podlagi finančnih podatkov prvin poslovnega procesa ter s pomočjo metode podatkovnih ovojnic (DEA). Restavracije, ki so bile vključene v raziskavo, dosegajo v povprečju 66-odstotno učinkovitost. Ugotovitve raziskave ponujajo vpogled v delovanje podeželskega prehrambnega gostinstva, ki predstavlja pomemben in nepogrešljiv del slovenskega turizma.

Ključne besede: učinkovitost, prehrambno gostinstvo, Slovenija, DEA
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 133–145

Kakovost v prehrambnih gostinskih obratih na podeželju: primer slovenske Istre

Marko Kukanja in Tanja Planinc

Namen pričujočega prispevka je raziskati kakovost storitev v prehrambnih gostinskih obratih, ki se nahajajo na podeželju slovenske Istre. Kakovost storitev smo izmerili s pomočjo raziskovalnega inštrumenta DINESERV. Vzorec raziskave obsega 25 prehrambnih gostinskih obratov ter 250 veljavnih vprašalnikov, ki smo jih pridobili od domačih gostov, ki so obedovali v preučevanih obratih. Na podlagi rezultatov eksplorativne faktorske analize smo identificirali dve glavni skupini faktorjev (dimenzij), ki najbolje pojasnjujeta zaznano kakovost storitev v prehrambnih gostinskih obratih na preučevanem območju: (1) vživetje, odzivnost in zanesljivost ter (2) urejenost. Rezultati naše raziskave se razlikujejo od dimenzij kakovosti, ki so bile identificirane v predhodni študiji (Kukanja & Planinc, 2015), izvedeni na obalnem območju slovenske Istre. Rezultati pričujoče raziskave so pomembni za izboljšanje kakovosti storitev tako na mikro ravni (restavracije) kot na nivoju turistične destinacije (makro raven). Menedžerji prehrambnih gostinskih obratov morajo primarno zagotoviti kakovost obeh identificiranih dimenzij kakovosti ter nenehno meriti raven kakovosti ponudbe, da bi zadovoljili pričakovanja svojih gostov. Priporočljivo je, da se rezultati znanstvenih raziskav vključijo v bodoče strategije razvoja turizma na preučevanem območju. Predlagamo, da se raziskovalci v prihodnjih raziskavah osredotočijo na ugotavljanje potencialnih razlik v kakovosti ponudbe med prehramb-

nimi gostinskimi obrati, ki poslujejo na območju slovenske Istre, ter tistimi obrati, ki poslujejo v konkurenčnih podeželskih destinacijah (hrvaška Istra, Italija).

Ključne besede: prehrambno gostinstvo, kakovost, DINESERV, podeželje, slovenska Istra
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 147–159

Konkurenčnost dogodkov dediščinskega turizma na hrvaškem podeželju
Danijel Drpić in Elena Rudan

V zadnjih nekaj letih se na hrvaškem podeželju razvijajo različne oblike turizma, osredotočene predvsem na dediščino. Trajnostno upravljanje bogate kulturne in zgodovinske dediščine hrvaškega podeželja lahko povečuje tržno prepoznavnost in konkurenčnost. Med pomembne elemente dediščinskega turizma sodijo dogodki, ki izhajajo iz skupnosti in njenih tradicij ter to skupnost predstavljajo na turističnem trgu. Dogodki s svojimi značilnostmi in edinstvenostjo, ki temeljijo na dediščini, omogočajo ustvarjanje edinstvenega turističnega produkta in preko dediščine promocijo hrvaških podeželskih destinacij. Turistični dogodki in programi zagotavljajo uspešno interpretacijo elementov dediščine, krepijo lokalno identiteto in ustvarjajo pozitivne povezave med obiskovalci in gostitelji. Namen prispevka je raziskati in predlagati možnosti za inoviranje prireditev, ki temeljijo na dediščini hrvaškega podeželja. Analiza zajema đakoviški festival vezenja, ki se odvija v Đakovu. Da bi olajšali doseganje konkurenčnosti hrvaških kulturnih prireditev, ki temeljijo na dediščini, v prispevku predlagamo model certificiranja in nagrajevanja dogodkov, tako imenovani CroRuralisHeritage Awards Certification Model. Da bi dosegali konkurenčnost turistične ponudbe hrvaškega podeželja, so v prispevku podane tudi smernice za ustvarjanje turističnih dogodkov, ki temeljijo na dediščini kot pomembnem elementu pri uresničevanju inovativne in trajnostne turistične ponudbe.

Ključne besede: dediščina, dogodki, trajnostni razvoj, turizem na podeželju, Hrvaška, đakoviški vezi
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 161–172

Razpoznavnost marketinških praks v podeželskem turizmu: študija primera Bosne in Hercegovine
Merima Činjarević, Almir Peštek in Sanja Tufo

Želeli smo raziskati posebnost tržnih praks malih podjetij s podeželja v kontekstu tako imenovanega »zaostalega gospodarstva« v jugovzhodni Evropi – Bosni in Hercegovini. Za potrebe te eksplorativne študije smo uporabili kvalitativno metodologijo z uporabo študije več primerov in polstrukturiranih intervjujev. Zbrali smo devet primerov malih podjetij v turizmu na podeželju in opravili intervjuje z njihovimi lastniki. Analiza podatkov temelji na interpretativni raziskovalni paradigmi. Rezultati kažejo, da večina malih turističnih podjetij na podeželju uporablja marketinške prijeme in vse kaže, da imajo ta podjetja pozitiven podjetniški in profesionalni odnos do marketinških ukrepov. Poleg tega večina malih turističnih podjetij na podeželju

sledi tako imenovanemu modelu coniranja in obiskovalcem ponuja neokrnjene naravne atrakcije. Na podlagi ključnih konceptov, opredeljenih v sklopu procesa kodiranja, smo v raziskavi izluščili naslednje teme: raznolikost izdelkov, pristnost izkušenj, tržne zmogljivosti in poslovni izzivi. Ta študija poglablja razumevanje marketinških aktivnosti majhnih turističnih podjetij na podeželju. Poleg tega oblikovalcem politik ponuja dragocene informacije za oblikovanje in izvajanje politik/programov, ki spodbujajo rast te skupine podjetij.

Ključne besede: podeželje, marketing, razvoj turizma, mala turistična podjetja
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 173–184

Sistemski pristop h kulturnemu turizmu in k prireditvam

Tadeja Jere Jakulin

Prispevek obravnava metodologijo sistemskega pristopa v kontekstu kulturnega turizma. Sistemski pristop se v naravoslovju in inženirstvu široko uporablja zadnjih sedemdeset let, odkar je Ludwig von Bertalanffy objavil svoj manifest splošne sistemske teorije (1952) in Norbert Wiener svojega o kibernetiki (1948). Namen splošne teorije sistemov in kibernetike je »ontologija« delovanja, ki jo prikazuje povratna informacija. Njen cilj je najti metodo za napovedovanje posledic odločanja. Industrijski inženiring je pomen sistemskega načina razmišljanja odkril, ko je Forrester objavil delo *Industrial Dynamics* (1961), družbene vede pa so sistemsko mišljenje odkrile v delu Petra Sengeja *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), v katerem je obravnavana učeča se organizacija. Kulturni turizem predstavlja element kompleksnega turističnega sistema v globalnih in lokalnih razsežnostih, kjer kulturne prireditve kot še manjši elementi igrajo bistveno vlogo v turistični ponudbi. V prispevku sta predstavljeni dve metodi sistemskega pristopa kot metodologije za raziskovanje kompleksnih pojavov, in sicer: sistemsko mišljenje in modeliranje. Gre za metodi, ki lahko pomembno vplivata na sprejemanje odločitev. Prispevek ob tem predstavi primernost sistemske metodologije pri odločanju in modeliranju kulturnega turizma.

Ključne besede: sistemski pristop, analitično in sistemsko razmišljanje, kompleksnost, kulturni turizem in dogodki, modeliranje
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 185–191

Varnostni izzivi v hotelih: implikacije za izbrane hotele v Owerri v Nigeriji

Edwin Chigozie Nwokorie in Polycarp Igbojekwe

Študija obravnava problematiko varnosti v izbranih hotelih nigerijske prestolnice Owerri in učinek percepcije varnosti na zvestobo gostov. Z anketiranjem s pomočjo strukturiranega vprašalnika so bila zbrana stališča glede pomena fizičnih, osebnih in sistemskih varnostnih groženj v hotelskem sektorju. Povezanost med izbranimi spremenljivkami je bila merjena z uporabo Pearsonovega korelacijskega koeficienta. Rezultat je pokazal šibko pozitivno korelacijo ($r^2 = 0{,}270$) med percepcijo varnostnih razmer in izborom hotela, medtem ko je bila ugotovljena statistično neznačilna pozitivna korelacija ($r^2 = 0{,}086$) med zaznano varnostjo gostov in prisotnostjo neformalnih oblik poslovanja v hotelu. Ugotovljeni so bili tudi pomanjkanje varnostnega sodelovanja med hoteli na tem območju, neustrezni izhodi v sili in slaba notranja varnost. Rezultati študije priporočajo ravnovesje med zagotavljanjem ustrezne varnosti in zasebnosti gosta.

Ključne besede: lojalnost gostov, odnosi z gosti, zadovoljstvo, hotelirstvo, varnost
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 193–205

Orodja za razvoj trajnostnega turizma v Bosni in Hercegovini

Nemanja Šarenac, Mladen Rebić in Milica Bojat

Razvoj trajnostnega turizma temelji na ekološki trajnosti, načinih rabe obnovljivih virov ter na socio-kulturni in gospodarski trajnosti. Deležniki v turističnem sektorju imajo pri njegovem razvoju pomembno vlogo, populacija pa predstavlja enega od ključnih segmentov za razvoj trajnostnega turizma. Namen pričujočega članka je analizirati in določiti najučinkovitejši način razvoja trajnostnega turizma za Bosno in Hercegovino. Razumevanje različnih pristopov k razvoju turizma in njihovo vključevanje v proces lahko znatno poveča trajnostnost nadaljnjega razvoja turizma. Raziskava je bila izvedena v obliki raziskave stališč lokalne skupnosti celotnega ozemlja Bosne in Hercegovine. Vzorec je bil sprejemljiv, temeljil je na celotni populaciji in vključeval več kot 385 anketiranih iz različnih demografskih kategorij. Glavna hipoteza poudarja, da izobraževanje državljanov o pomembnosti koncepta trajnostnega turizma predstavlja ključni pristop k nadaljnjemu razvoju turizma Bosne in Hercegovine. Analiza pristopa k razvoju trajnostnega turizma je pokazala, da večina anketiranih upošteva zmanjšanje onesnaženosti okolja kot najpomembnejše orodje za razvoj trajnostnega turizma v Bosni in Hercegovini. Anketirani tudi poudarjajo pomembnost zagotavljanja aktivne udeležbe vseh deležnikov v kreiranju turističnih proizvodov, predvsem lokalnih vlad. V skladu s pridobljenimi rezultati raziskave je bila glavna hipoteza raziskave ovržena.

Ključne besede: trajnostni razvoj, gospodarska trajnostnost, socio-kulturna trajnostnost, okoljska trajnostnost, kulturna dediščina
Academica Turistica, 12(2), 207–217

Instructions for Authors

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Academica Turistica – Tourism and Innovation Journal (AT-TIJ) is a peer-reviewed journal that provides a forum for the dissemination of knowledge on tourism and innovation from a social sciences perspective. It especially welcomes contributions focusing on innovation in tourism and adaptation of innovations from other fields in tourism settings.

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The title page should include the title of the article (no more than 85 characters, including spaces), full name of the author(s), affiliation (institution name and address) of each author clearly identified; linked to each author by use of superscript numbers, corresponding author's full name, telephone, and e-mail address.

Abstract. The authors are obliged to prepare two abstracts – one in English and one (translated) in Slovene language. For foreign authors translation of the abstract into Slovene will be provided.

The content of the abstract should be structured into the following sections: purpose, methods, results, and conclusion. It should only contain the information that appears in the text as well. It should contain no reference to figures, tables and citations published in the main text, and should not exceed 250 words.

Beneath the abstract, the authors should supply appropriate keywords (3–6) in English and in Slovene. For foreign authors the translation of the abstract into Slovene will be provided.

The main text should contain a coherent and logical structure preferably following the IMRAD format (Introduction, Methods, Research [and] Discussion). However, other structures are also welcome (e.g. Introduction, Development and Conclusions) as long as the text maintains its logical structure and focus. Acknowledgments are optional.

The length of the articles should not exceed 9,000 words (including tables, figures, and references), double spaced, using Times New Roman font sized 12.

Tables. Each table should be submitted on a separate page in a Word document after References. Each table shall have a brief caption; explanatory matter should be in the footnotes below the table. The table shall contain means and the units of variation (SD, SE, etc.) and must be free of nonsignificant decimal places. Abbreviations used in the tables must be consistent with those used in the text and figures. Definition symbols should be listed in the order of appearance, determined by reading horizontally across the table and should be identified by standard symbols. All tables should be numbered consecutively (Table 1, Table 2, etc.).

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One author. Tourism innovation specific is mentioned (Brooks, 2010). Thomas (1992) had concluded ...

Two authors. This result was later contradicted (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). Price and Murphy (2000) pointed out ...

Three to five authors, first citation. Laroche, Bergeron, and Barbaro-Forleo (2001) had found ... It was also discovered (Salamon, Sokolowski, Haddock, & Tice, 2013) ...

Three to five authors, subsequent citations. Laroche et al. (2009) or (Salamon et al., 2011).

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For detailed instructions please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, 2009, Chapter 6).

Examples of Reference List

Books

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Swarbrooke, J., & Horner, S. (2007). *Consumer behaviour in tourism.* Oxford, England: Butterworth-Heinemann.

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Thomas, J. (1992, July). *Tourism and the environment: An exploration of the willingness to pay of the average visitor.* Paper presented at the conference Tourism in Europe, Durham, England.

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Sedmak, G. (2006). *Pomen avtentičnosti turističnega proizvoda: primer destinacije Piran* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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of the UN nonprofitt handbook (Comparative Nonprofit Sector Working Paper No. 49). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Web Pages

Croatian Bureau of Statistics. (2001). *Census of population, households and dwellings.* Retrieved from http://www.dzs.hr/Eng/censuses/Census2001/census.htm

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