

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PLANNING OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OF COASTAL DESTINATION

Scientific paper

Draženka Birkić
Ida Čubelić Pilija
Jelena Kljaić Šebrek

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to support the hypothesis The local government insufficiently uses strong mechanisms of influence in creation and implementation of sustainable development concept in the coastal destinations.

Design – The special focus in this paper is given to the role and the responsibility of the local government and key stakeholders in the coastal destinations, since the local government is considered to be the most responsible for the coordination of tourism development at local level and support of sustainable development approach.

Methodology – The desk research was used in this paper and the relevant literature was studied, publicly available planning strategic documents were collected and analyzed by the assessment instrument developed by Simpson (2001). Semi structured in depth interview was conducted in with representatives of local government researching the role and attitude towards the implementation of the sustainable development principles.

Approach – The research was conducted in 44 coastal tourist destinations whose strategic planning documents were assessed by the dimensions developed in assessment instrument: Strategic indicators of planning documents - goals and objectives, Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis, Stakeholder participation, Vision and values, Implementation and review.

Findings – The results of the research prove that local government has the irreplaceable role and responsibility in the tourism development at the local level but insufficiently knows and implements concept of sustainable development in strategic planning documents.

Originality – The originality of this research is in the fact that assessment instrument developed by Simpson is for the first time used to assess implementation of sustainable development principles in the strategic planning documents of the coastal tourist destinations.

Keywords sustainable tourism development, coastal destination, local government, planning documents

INTRODUCTION

In the basis of sustainable development there is influence of human activities on the environment as a result of explosive human population growth, increasing economy activities of the humanity, development of international trade and growing humanity needs for energy and material resources.¹ Sustainable tourism development of the coastal destination implies tourism development in the scope and in the way that is long-term acceptable to the local community and that doesn't degrade or radically change the environment. Overuse of resources causes decreased possibility of the environment to meet the needs of the future generations. There are many examples of

¹ Črnjar, M., Črnjar, K., *Menadžment održivog razvoja*, Fakultet za menadžment u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu u Opatiji, Rijeka, 2009, p. 447.

world tourist destinations where negative influence of tourism development is noted. Negative effects of tourism is referred to the tourism growth was led by the principles such as unplanned development that is partially or completely demand oriented or market driven.

Tourism is seen as a key of the economy growth and development in developed and developing countries. As the other economy aspects weakens, tourism is seen as fast and simple solution in fighting economy failures. The mass tourism, that is with great enthusiasm accepted in 1950s, has very little attention paid to the acceptability of tourist products in certain destinations and social and environmental consequences of the tourism development. The environmental approach to tourism planning emerged when positive and negative effects of tourism became visible.² The focus moved from narrow economic and physical planning to environmental issues. Similar to this focus change, the change appeared in increasing involvement of local communities as tourism caused irrecoverable and harmful effects to the communities and cultures exposed to tourism and as alternative, planning and management became the need of socially accepted tourism development.³

Tourism development is the “process in which tourism becomes more or less emphasized direction of a region, opposing to the solely growth that focuses on increasing of quantitative indicators, presents an idea of common benefits on the complex level”.⁴ Development decision makers and representatives of local government have to take into consideration all possible positive and negative effects of tourism growth and development. Therefore it is important that all of the tourism destination development activities are part of strategic planning process directing all of the activities towards the sustainable goals of tourism development. This paper researches the role of local government in field of planning of sustainable development of the coastal destinations through the analysis of public available strategic planning documents of tourism development. Publicly available strategic planning documents on tourism development are analyzed according to the method developed by Ken Simpson.⁵

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism undoubtedly deeply affects destinations all over the world.⁶ In some regions, tourism revitalized local economy, while in other destroyed. Unfortunately, many destinations still suffer from social and ecological consequences caused by fast tourism growth and forced to use mitigation measures because of incorrect planning and

² Krippendorf, J., “Towards new tourism policies: the importance of environmental and social factors”, *Tourism Management*, 3(3), 1982, pp. 137-138.

³ Murphy, P.E., “Community driven tourism planning”, *Tourism Management*, 9 (2), 1988, p. 99.

⁴ Vukonić, B., Keča, K., *Turizam i razvoj*. Mikrorad, Zagreb, 2001, p. 197.

⁵ Simpson, K., “Strategic planning and community involvement as contributors to sustainable tourism development”, *Current Issues in Tourism* 4(1), 2001, p. 23.

⁶ Ruhanen, L., “Strategic planning for local tourism destinations :an analysis of tourism plans”, *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 1(3), 2004, p. 239.

monitoring of tourism development.⁷ Therefore, Hall, correctly states that tourism cannot be led in ad hoc way, without leading structures and prior created sustainable tourism development strategies⁸. This is certainly needed as often it is too late to change the development directions once it is established in the destination causing the destination to suffer from environmental and social problems that are harmful to tourists and local population of the destinations⁹. Although the concept of sustainable tourism development is widely supported in the literature, there are signs that tourism practice slowly adopts sustainability principles and in that sense it can be said that principle of sustainable development is easier to define than to implement.¹⁰ According to Mc Kercher, tourism is industrial activity that is competing for the right to use and sometimes to overuse the natural resources.¹¹ As Murphy stated, tourism is initiated without consideration of social and environmental consequences of tourism development.¹² According to some authors, the financial effects of tourism in underdeveloped areas often act in favor of the ones who at least need additional income while the poor populations do not benefit from tourism all.¹³ The sustainable approach to tourism development supports the need to observe the overall view of negative ecological and social effects and excludes the observation of solely economic effects as dominant objective of tourism development of a destination. It emphasizes the need of broadly setting the long-term objectives which cannot be cancelled because of the urgency of economic objectives that endanger the sustainability.¹⁴ Also it is important to state that the formal planning process doesn't present guarantee for implementation efficiency. Furthermore there are many reasons that support sustainable tourism planning as key point in eliminating the negative effects on tourist destinations' local communities. Certain number of planning approaches is developed in order to meet the changes in development requirements, characteristics of tourism industry and global increase of tourist number.¹⁵ The first phase, the principle of economic approach to tourism planning, proved certain lack of knowledge on how tourism affects the destination.¹⁶ Planning in that sense was observed only as a support in establishing new hotels, assuring transport approach to the points of interest and organization of tourism

⁷ Inskip, E., *Tourism Planning: An integrated and sustainable development approach* (New York: John Wiley and Sons), 1991, p. 25.

⁸ More details: Hall, C.M., *Tourism Development, Dimensions and Issues* (3rd Ed) (South Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998.

⁹ Gunn, C.A., Var, T., *Tourism Planning Basics, Concepts, Cases*. 4th edition New York, Routledge, 2002, p. 15.

¹⁰ Simpson, K., "Strategic planning and community involvement as contributors to sustainable tourism development", *Current Issues in Tourism* 4(1), 2001, p. 13.

¹¹ McKercher, B., "Some fundamental truths about tourism: Understanding tourism's social and environmental impacts", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1(1), 1993, p. 8.

¹² More details: Murphy, P.E., "Community driven tourism planning", *Tourism Management*, 9 (2), 1988, 96-104.

¹³ More details: Crain, M., *Contested territories: The politics of touristic development at the shrine of El Rocío in Southern Andalusia*. In J. Boissevain (ed.) *Coping with Tourist: European Reactions to Mass Tourism*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996.

¹⁴ More details: Hall, C.M., *Tourism Planning: Policies, Processes and Relationships* (Harlow: Pearson Education), 2000;

Pigram, J.J., Cooper, M.J., *Economic impact analysis in tourism planning and development*. In D. Pearce (ed.) *Tourism in the South Pacific*. Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1980.

¹⁵ More details: Hall, C.M., *Tourism Development, Dimensions and Issues* (3rd Ed) (South Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998.

¹⁶ Getz, D., "Models in tourism planning: Towards integration of theory and practice", *Tourism management*, 7(1), 1986, p. 30.

promotional campaigns. The second phase land usage approach was established in period when negative effects of tourism were not observed or were very little and as such neglectable. Tourism planning generally included detailed reviews of physical resources of a country or region and not considering the opposite effects of projects to a surrounding areas or environment.¹⁷ Sustainable approach to tourism planning lays on 2 limitations: increased level of stakeholders' participation in planning process and the need of strategic orientation to tourism planning. While Ritchie and Crouch confirmed that more and more destinations adopt sustainable strategic perspectives in tourism development planning¹⁸, Simpson stated that although "the models of participative approach and strategic orientation are widely accepted, there are no previous attempts to determinate the scope by which it influenced the real processes of sustainable tourism planning".¹⁹ Tosun and Jenkins assessed development of tourism planning from the other perspective, stating that modern tourism plans are only the result of world multinational consultants who use numerous methods with aim to strengthen their image.²⁰ The role of local governance in destination planning process is irreplaceable and either supportive or limiting towards the sustainable tourism development. Middelton and Hawkins state that sustainable tourism development is closely connected with the authority and capacity of local government responsible for tourism destination. Regardless the ideological character, local government presents key development barrier of development and management of tourism activity.²¹ It is important to notice that sustainable tourism development approach should be the central principle of public policy planning that requires redefining the priorities in order to achieve sustainable tourism development.²² It is important to state that local government has the most direct influence on tourism development and as such can significantly decrease the negative effects of tourism. Local government is responsible for planning and development of resources for tourism needs. Assurance and maintaining of the infrastructure can have significant influence on attractiveness of certain destination. In Croatia, local government is often invited to foster, support and facilitate development and promotion of local tourism, although the planning responsibility can vary from national government and regional government to local bodies.

¹⁷ Baud-Bovy, M., "New concepts in planning for tourism and recreation", *Tourism management*, 3(4), 1982, p. 309

Murphy, P.E., "Community driven tourism planning", *Tourism Management*, 9(2), 1988, p. 97

¹⁸ More details: Ritchie, J.R.B. and Crouch, G.I., "The Competitive destination: A sustainability perspective", *Tourism management*, 21(1), 2000, 1-7.

¹⁹ Simpson, K., "Strategic planning and community involvement as contributors to sustainable tourism development", *Current Issues in Tourism* 4(1), 2001, p. 4.

²⁰ More details: Tosun, C., Jenkins, C.L., "The evolution of tourism planning in the third world countries –a critique", *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 4, 1998, p. 101-114

²¹ More details: Middelton, V.T.C., Hawkins, R., *Sustainable Tourism A Marketing Perspective*. Oxford: Butterworth-Henemann, 1998.

Murphy, P.E., *Tourism: A Community Approach* (London: Routledge), 1985.

²² More details: Bramwell, B., "Governance the state and sustainable tourism :a political economy approach", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19, 4-5, 2011, p. 459-77.

Ruhanen, L., "Strategic planning for local tourism destinations :an analysis of tourism plans", *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 1(3), 2004, p. 239-253.

Wesley, A., Pforr, C., "The governance of coastal tourism: Unravelling the layers of complexity at Smiths Beach, Western Australia", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(6), 2010, p. 773-792.

METHODOLOGY

Three coastal counties in Croatia (Istria-county, Primorje-Gorski Kotar county and Zadar county) with accompanying 44 coastal tourist destinations were chosen for the research of the scope in which sustainable development principles, strategic planning and participative approach are included in the planning process of the coastal tourist destinations. The analysis was conducted on the recent, publicly available tourism planning documents of each of 44 coastal tourist destination including the county strategic development plans. The analyzed plans include tourism strategies, development plans, tourism management plans etc. Marketing plans were not included, although certain number of local tourist plans include tourist marketing plans. Out of 44 tourist destinations, only 8 (18%) destinations had strategic plan documents. 8 coastal tourist destinations in Istria County stated that they do not have strategic plan documents but that they act according to county strategic tourism development plan. During the sampling period Zadar county was in the process of adoption of the tourism development strategic plan document. The mentioned plan passed public discussions and was included in this research although it was not formally adopted. In total, there were 11 development planning documents included in this research; 3 county strategic plan documents and 8 local strategic plan documents. This research did not include yearly tourism development plans of mentioned coastal tourist destinations.

The included planning documents were analyzed by using the assessment mechanism developed by Simpson, led by the idea that planning established on the principles of sustainable tourism requires strategic orientation and participation of stakeholders in the planning process.²³ This approach presents a challenge to the government at all levels to create clear objectives and tourism policy with purpose of assuring sustainable tourism development, partly abandoning commercial interests. Simpson describes the evaluation instrument as „an aggregate measure of elevator attitudes, culminating in an inventory of contribution components, which together delineate the specific planning process under review“.²⁴ Besides Simpson, there are also other studies addressing tourism planning issues that adopted qualitative methods, particularly the content analysis of tourism plans (Getz, 1992, Bahaire, Elliott-White 1999, Jennings, 2001).²⁵ Simpson's evaluation instrument, due to its quantitative origins, provides possibility of objective assessment of sustainable development dimension in tourism planning documents. The assessments of the planning documents is done by the authors itself and Likert 3 point scale is used (0-item is not supported in the document, 1- item is partly supported in the document, 2- item is completely supported in the document). Tourism development strategic plans assessed by the presented dimensions can prove that planning process is implemented on basis of strategic planning, participation approach and sustainable development principles. Assessment mechanism shown in Table 1. provide possibility for assessment of the scope in which plans of analyzed coastal tourist destinations were in line or have adopted sustainable development principles, strategic planning, or participation approach, analyzed through the

²³ More details: Simpson, K., "Strategic planning and community involvement as contributors to sustainable tourism development", *Current Issues in Tourism* 4(1), 2001, p. 20-27.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 23.

²⁵ Ruhanen, L., "Strategic planning for local tourism destinations: an analysis of tourism plans", *Tourism and Hospitality Planning and Development*, 1(3), 2004, p. 242-243.

following dimensions: Strategic indicators of planning documents - goals and objectives, Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis, Stakeholder participation, Vision and values, Implementation and review.

Table 1: Tourism planning process assessment instrument

A. Strategic indicators of planning documents - goals and objectives	Score
1. The planning document includes broadly based goals related to the nature and scale of future tourism development	
2. The planning document identifies includes broadly based goals related to the economic benefits of future tourism development	
3. The planning document includes broadly based goals related to environmental protection	
4. The planning document includes broadly based goals related to community values and lifestyle protection	
5. The planning document includes broadly based goals which emphasize the local benefits of tourism development	
6. The planning document identifies a range of alternative strategies by which broadly based goals may be achieved	
7. The planning document evaluates each strategy option prior to determining a range of specific objectives	
8. Specific objectives support previously established broad goals	
9. Specific objectives selected are based on supply capability as opposed to market demand	
10. Specific objectives target the equitable distribution of tourism economic benefits throughout the local area	
11. Specific objectives selected are realistically achievable in the context of the current situation analysis	
12. Specific objectives for future tourism activity are quantified and readily measurable	
B. Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis	
13. The planning document describes the area's principal geographic features	
14. The planning document describes the main characteristics of the local climate	
15. The planning document identifies flora and fauna which are unique to the area	
16. The planning document assesses the resilience and /or fragility of the physical environment	
17. The planning document identifies current population levels and demographics.	
18. The planning document identifies current land use and ownership patterns in the area	
19. The planning document identifies the major economic activities in the local area	
20. The planning document establishes the relative importance of tourism, compared with other industries, to the economic development of the local area	

21. The planning document quantifies the economic benefit of tourism to the area	
22. The planning document quantifies the employment creation ability of local tourism activity	
23. The planning document describes the principal tourism sites in the area	
24. The planning document evaluates the current capacity of tourism plant and infrastructure	
25. The planning document evaluates the adequacy of business skills possessed by local tourism industry operators	
26. The planning document includes quantitative analysis of current visitor numbers, length of stay and spending	
27. The planning document acknowledges a need to integrate local tourism strategies with national policies for tourism development	
C. Stakeholder participation	
28. The time dimension of the planning process reflects a long - term orientation	
29. The planning documents deals with the relationship with the key destination stakeholders	
30. Ministry of tourism and National tourist board took part in the planning process	
31. The relevant regional and territorial organization(s) took part in the planning process	
32. Governmental (national or regional or local) opinion influenced the final strategic direction selected	
33. The relevant regional tourism organization(s) took part in the planning process	
34. The local tourism industry took part in the planning process	
35. Regional /district tourism organization or local tourism industry opinion influenced the final strategic direction selected	
36. Representatives of existing visitor groups took part in the planning process	
37. Existing visitor group opinion influenced the final strategic direction selected	
38. Other local organizations (non-tourism)took part in the planning process	
39. Ordinary local residents took part in the planning process	
40. Secondary stakeholder (other local organizations) opinion influenced the final strategic direction selected	
D. Vision and values	
41. The planning document identifies locally important community values	
42. The planning documents identify locally important lifestyle features	
43. The planning documents identify current issues which are critical to residents	
44. The planning document assesses community attitudes to tourism	
45. The planning document assesses the overall quality of life in the area	
46. The planning document includes a vision for the future which aligns with local community values, attitudes and lifestyles	
E. Implementation and review	
47. Specific objectives are prioritized in terms of implementation urgency	

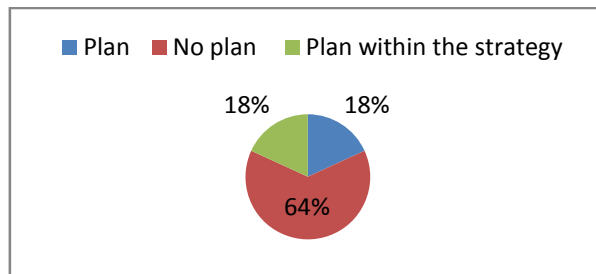
48. The planning document clearly assigns responsibility for key task implementation	
49. The planning document contains a clearly articulated review and evaluation mechanism	
50. The planning document estimates the resource cost of the recommended development strategy	
51. The planning document indicates specific methods by which the identified resource cost are to be allocated to development participant	

Source: Author's modification of Simpson (2001) assessment instrument

STUDY RESULTS

There were 44 tourist destinations from 3 counties of Croatia (Istra county, Primorje-Gorski Kotar county and Zadar county) were included in this study. Only 8 tourist destinations had strategic planning documents that were assessed. Also there were 3 strategic planning documents on county level that were included in the study. In total there were 11 strategic planning documents that were assessed. Each of the planning documents was analyzed by the quantitative assessment instrument developed by Simpson (2001) where the selected strategic plans were evaluated by the following dimensions: Strategic indicators of planning documents - goals and objectives, Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis Stakeholder participation, Vision and values and Implementation and review. The Figure 1. shows the structure of the presence of the planning documents in the monitored tourist destinations.

Figure 1: Local tourist destination planning documents

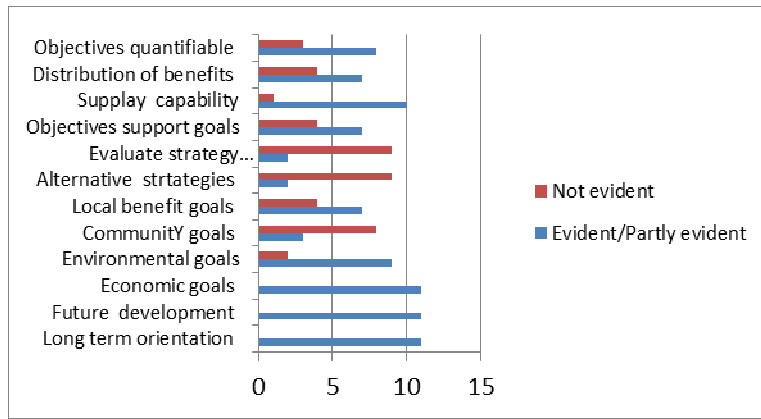


Source: Author's interpretation

From the Picture 1. it is visible that out of 44 tourist destinations, 8 (18%) destinations have strategic tourist planning document, 8 (18%) destinations do not have strategic planning document but act under the county strategic tourism planning document and 28 tourist destinations (64%) do not have strategic tourism planning document at all.

The first dimension Strategic indicators of planning documents - goals and objectives includes 12 items that assess future development direction and creation of base for further development within the planned development. The Figure 2. shows the assessment of items within the Strategic indicators dimension that were assessed and scaled on the 3- point scale (evident, partly evident, non-evident).

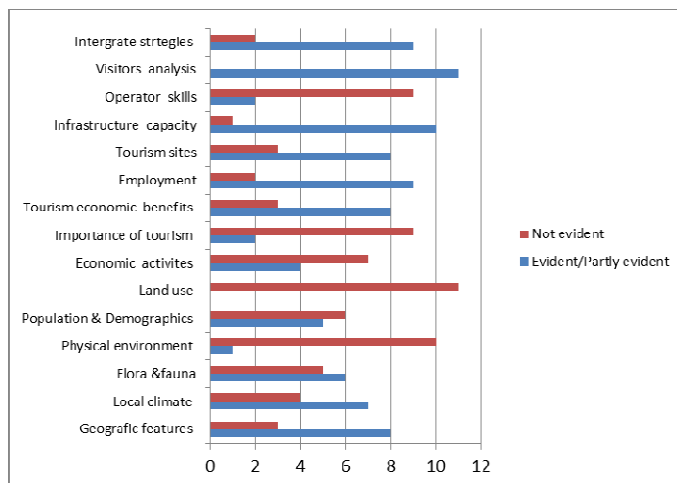
Figure 2: Assessment of the Strategic indicators



Source: Author's interpretation

As visible in the Figure 2., most of the assessed strategic plans possess the assessment items from the Strategic indicators dimension. Long term orientation (defined as at least 3 years) was present in all 11 assessed planning documents. Also all of the documents included future development and economic goals. Supply capability is supported in 10 planning documents while Environmental goals were supported in 9 planning documents. The weakest item is proven to be Evaluation strategy options and Alternative strategies that were not evident in 9 planning documents. The second dimension concerns Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis and assessment of the evaluated planning documents is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Assessment of the Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis

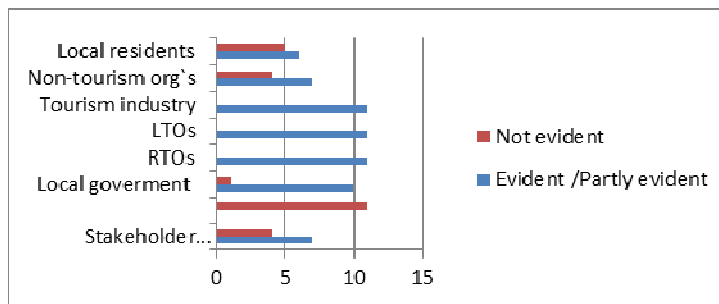


Source: Author's interpretation

Dimension Physical, ecological and economic situation analysis includes 15 items assessing the mentioned characteristics of the destination and considering the visitors' activities in the mentioned destination. The item Visitor Analysis is evident in all of the assessed planning documents. More than 50% the assessed documents included the items Integrate strategies, Infrastructure capacity, Tourism sites, Employment, and Tourism economic benefits. The item Land use is not evident in any of the assessed tourism planning documents, while only 1 planning document includes Physical environment item.

The third dimension is named Stakeholder participation and includes 13 items. The Figure 4. shows assessment of the stakeholders' participation in the studies tourism planning documents.

Figure 4: Stakeholder participation in the planning process

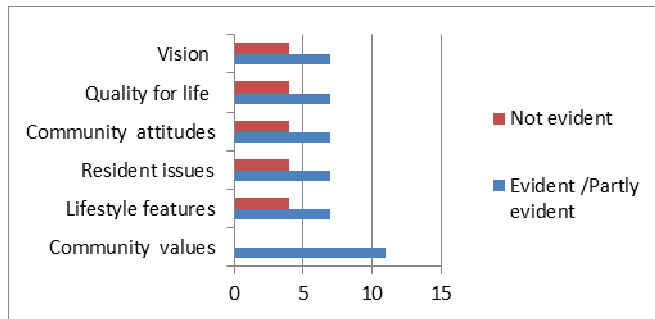


Source: Author's interpretation

From the Figure 4. it is visible that more than half of the planning documents include stakeholder relationship. State government is not participating in none of the assessed planning documents, while all of the observed documents include participation of Tourism industry, local and regional tourism organizations in the Strategic Planning process. Participation of Local residents is included in 6 Strategic tourism planning documents as certainly presents the item that the destinations will have to increase. Local government is participating in 10 observed strategic planning process which is expected according to the role and responsibility that local government have in the tourism development.

The dimension Vision and value measures the level in which the planning process demonstrate the importance of the dominant values of the local community and the scope of which the values are included in establishing of a vision and value in a particular tourist destination. This dimension is formed to measure the scope in which the most important values are extracted from the local community and the scope in which the values are integrated in the vision created by the strategic tourism planning document. Figure 5. shows the scope in which the items are evident in the observed tourist destinations strategic planning documents.

Figure 5: Destination community vision and values

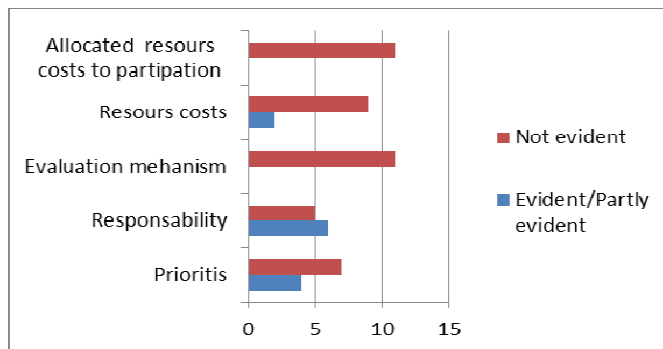


Source: Author's interpretation

From the Figure 5. it is visible that all of the observed planning documents includes community values item. 7 planning documents included items of vision, quality of life, community attitudes, resident issues and lifestyle features.

The final phase of the Planning process concerns implementation and monitoring of the implementation. The last dimension Implementation and review is established with aim of assessing the scope of responsibility of the stakeholders in the development process. The Figure 6. shows the level of which the items within the Implementation and review dimension are included in the observed planning documents.

Figure 6: Implementation and review



Source: Author's interpretation

As visible from the Figure 6., the Implementation and review dimension is the weakest dimension in the assessed strategic tourism planning documents. In none of the observed planning documents there were no items Methods for allocated resources costs to participation and Evaluation mechanism items evident. In this part it is proven to be true that the "Implementation and review part is the most fragile part of the tourism strategic planning process".

In order to enable objective assessment of the scope in which tourist plans are aligned with the assessment criteria, there was the evaluation system established. The evaluation is conducted in the way that every evident item receives 2 points, partly evident 1 point and none evident 0 points. In the dimension Strategic indicators, there were 12 items so that the maximum sum of the points is 24 (if all of the items are evident in the observed strategic planning document). Dimension Situation analysis could reach maximum of 30 points (if all of the 15 items are evident in the observed strategic planning documents), Stakeholder Participation dimension could reach maximum of 24 points, vision and Values maximum 12 points and Implementation and review maximum of 10 points. Therefore the strategic planning document that have all of the items evident can achieve maximum of 130 points. Table 2. Shows points achieved for the observed Strategic planning documents.

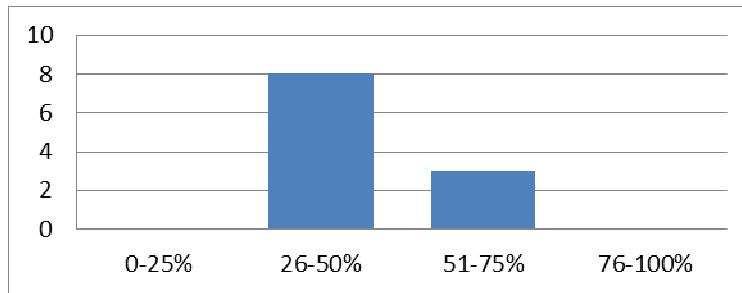
Table 2: Tourism plans and compliance with assessment criteria

	Strategic Indicators (Max score 24)		Situation analysis (Max score 30)		Stakeholder Participation (Max score 24)		Destination vision (Max score 12)		Implement and review (Max score 10)		Total (Max score 130)	
	score	%	score	%	score	%	score	%	score	%	score	%
Plan 1	15	63	14	47	19	79	12	100	3	30	63	48
Plan 2	19	79	8	27	14	58	4	33	2	20	47	36
Plan3	13	54	15	50	17	71	9	75	2	20	56	43
Plan4	20	83	20	67	20	83	10	42	2	20	72	55
Plan5	13	54	16	53	15	63	9	75	3	30	56	43
Plan6	15	63	14	47	16	67	6	50	3	30	54	42
Plan7	15	63	13	43	18	75	10	83	2	20	58	47
Plan8	15	63	14	47	19	79	12	100	3	30	62	48
Plan9	17	71	16	53	15	63	7	58	4	40	59	45
Plan10	23	96	11	36	14	58	12	100	6	60	66	51
Plan11	17	71	23	77	20	83	12	100	4	40	76	58

Source: Author's interpretation

By assessing the planning documents by their alignment with assessment criteria we could calculate the total assessment values for every plan as showed in the Table 2. Graphic interpretation of the total score is shown in the Figure 8. Where plans are grouped in 25% quartiles.

Figure 7: **Ranking of the tourism strategic plans-total assessment score**



Source: Author's interpretation

From the Figure 7, it is visible that none of the assessed strategic planning documents fulfilled all or the most of the criteria. 8 plans had 26-50% alignment to the criteria, while 3 plans are aligned with more than the half of the assessment criteria and are ranked within 51-75% of fulfilled criteria. The highest ranked plan achieved 76 of 130 points or 58% of assessment criteria. All 3 plans are regional plans and presents strategic planning documents at the regional level. In some future researches it should be researched why regional planning documents are ranked higher than local strategic planning documents.

The research through in depth semi-structured interviews with local destination managers proved that the adopted strategic planning documents are insufficiently implemented in the management of the tourist destination. The research showed that local destination managers have high level of cooperation with local and regional tourist organizations, but very low level of cooperation with state bodies and institutions. The local tourist destination managers share opinion that local government can significantly influence on the decreasing of the negative effects of tourism on the destinations. Also the respondents state that they are aware of the positive and negative effects of tourism on the local community and that sustainable tourism should create the conditions in order to lower the negative heritage from the past, non-planned building and building on the resources. Furthermore, results of semi-structured interview show that the quality of communication between tourist stakeholders that participate in tourism development processes is at rather low level and is explained by the lack of coordinator of the planned activities of the implementation of the sustainable development principles. The respondents confirmed that local government should have defined role in harmonizing of the development directions and supporting of forming sustainable tourist objectives in the destinations which is not the case now. The respondents stated that there is low level of support from the local population which indicates the need of education of local population through workshops and public discussions about the role and importance of the promotion of the sustainable development principles at the local community and in the interest of the local community. Based on the research results achieved, it is concluded that hypothesis of the paper The local government insufficiently uses strong mechanisms of influence in creation and implementation of sustainable development concept in the coastal destinations is supported.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to research the scope in which the principles of sustainable development are supported in strategic planning documents of tourism development of the coastal tourist destinations in 3 counties in Croatia. Despite of the fact that more and more destinations adopt strategic perspectives of sustainable development, this research proved that this was not the case in the 44 coastal tourist destinations included in this research. Out of 44 monitored coastal destinations, only 8 destinations had adopted tourism developments strategic plans. Based on the qualitative analysis of 8 local tourist planning documents and 3 regional planning documents and by using the assessment instrument, it is concluded that they are not in line with sustainable planning criteria. Based on the results from this study, it is proved that tourist destinations did not actively nor appropriately include sustainable development principles in planning and management of tourist development observed by the constructs of strategic orientation, situation analysis, participative approach, local community vision and values and implementation and monitoring of the target objectives. These elements are insufficiently integrated in planning practice of local tourist destinations. This study confirmed the irreplaceable role and responsibility of the local government in implementation of the sustainable development principles in the planning process of the tourist destinations and on the other hand it is proven that local government lacks knowledge and insufficiently implement concept of sustainability. This conclusion is supported by the results of the study where only 3 monitored planning documents fulfill the assessment criteria over 50% and the highest ranked document scored 76 (58%) of 130 points. Item current land use and ownership patterns in the construct Situation analysis is not included in any of the assessed strategic planning documents supporting the conclusion that tourism development in Croatian coastal tourist destinations is unplanned and fulfilling only formal criteria and supporting the short term economic benefits, prejudicing the quality criteria and devastating the coastal destinations. The construct Implementation and review scored the least number of points in all of the assessed planning documents, therefore it is concluded that implementation is the weakest point of the strategic planning process bringing into question the complete process of tourism development strategic planning based on sustainable development principles. The results of this research show that local tourist destinations planners do not implement sustainable development principles which is quite significant as at the local level there is the largest possibility of minor the negative effects of tourism, the reason for that can be that local has insufficient knowledge and experience in tourism planning based on the sustainable development principles.

The key challenge recognized through the assessment of the tourism development strategic planning documents and semi structured interview is the lack of understanding of sustainable concept of the local governments. This means that even well-structured ideas and objectives in the tourism development strategic planning documents are neglected because of the short term economic benefits. The limitations of this research is the rather small sample of only 8 tourism development strategic planning documents assessed. Through this research, some questions appeared that will be subject of the future researches. First of all is to assess the broader scope of the implementation of the sustainable development principles, from local destinations to regional and national

level. Also some case studies of best practices should be analyzed in order to disseminate the knowledge to the destinations that do not implement sustainable development principles now.

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Draženka Birkić, Lecturor
Karlovac University of Applied Sciences
Trg J.J. Strossmayera 9, 47 000 Karlovac, Croatia
Tel.: +385 99 6754 120
E-mail: birkicd07@gmail.com

Ida Čubelić Pilija, Doctoral candidate
Institute of social sciences Ivo Pilar
Marulićev trg 19/I, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia
Tel.: +385 91 5694 298
E-mail: Ida.Cubelic-Pilija@pilar.hr

Jelena Kljaić Šebrek, Doctoral candidate
University of Rijeka
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija
Primorska 42, p.p. 97, 51410 Opatija, Croatia
Tel.: +385 91 517 78 77
E-mail: jelenak101@gmail.com