## RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM POTENTIAL OF SMALL RURAL CITY OF POŽEGA

Scientific paper

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#### Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to analyse residents' attitudes towards tourism potentials of small rural city Požega.

Design – The special emphasis is on the satisfaction of local residents' with tourist facilities, their involvement in the tourism development and their stands of the main advantages and weaknesses of the tourism offer in rural city of Požega.

Methodology – The methodology of the research includes survey based on the questionnaire carried out in November 2013, among local residents in the city of Požega in Croatia.

Findings – This research work revealed that local residents' consider rural city of Požega as insufficiently developed tourism destination but they recognize the potential of excursion destination with ideal terms for developing tourism offer based on gastro-eno products. The findings show a lack of public participation in the decision-making processes.

Originality - It is a first study about the attitude of local residents' of small rural city Požega concerning the tourism development and determining the level of involment in decisions-making processes relating to the tourism offer.

Keywords managing, local residents, tourism, destination product

## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism in general has become one of the major cultural and economic forces in the world today, and is regarded as an important mean to benefit local communities.<sup>1</sup> Development of tourism has impact on the environment that can be positive or negative. Tourism cannot be developed without the environmental impact, but by implementation of strategic planning and managing tourism development, the negative impacts can be avoided or minimized. Tourism, beside the impact on natural resources, also has impact on the local residents.

Destination, observed from one point, represents the area in which the tourists wish to fulfill their expectations, but on the other hand, it is the living space of the local residents. Because of that fact it is important to form such destination product which will please the needs of tourists, without or with minimal effect on the local resident's everyday life. That, in a large scale, depends of the amount of pressure by the tourists on the destination, which is proportional to the number of tourists in the destination. Based on that, it is import to include the local residents in the tourism development to generate positive attitude of the local residents concerning the tourism and by that to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Marzuki, A., Local residents' perceptions towards economic impact of tourism development in Phuket, Tourism, Vol. 60., No. 2., Institut za turizam, Zagreb, 2012., p. 199.

contribute to the quality of the destination product, because the local residents are a part of the destination product.

## 1. THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE LOCAL RESIDENTS

Tourism development brings changes that are reflected on the local residents. Impacts can either become assets or detriments to local community. The following table gives an insight to the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the local residents. The listed impacts are important because the stand of opinion of the local residents towards tourism depends precisely on those impacts. If the tourism is evolving in such direction that positive impacts are achieved, the local residents will have a positive stand, and vice-versa. The main objective of tourism development, from the aspect of local residents, should be the increase of local resident's life quality.

Figure 1: The impacts of tourism on the local residents

Possible positive impact		Possible negative impacts	
-	Improves quality of life	-	Excessive drinking, alcoholism, gambling
-	Facilitates meeting visitors	—	Increased underage drinking
	(educational experience)	-	Crime, drugs, prostitution
-	Positive changes in values and	-	Increased smuggling
	customs	-	Language and cultural effects
-	Promotes cultural exchange	_	Unwanted lifestyle changes
-	Improves understanding of different communities	-	Displacement of residents for tourism development
-	Preserves cultural identity of host population	-	Negative changes in value customs
	Increases demand for historical and	_	Family disruption
_	cultural exhibits	-	Exclusion of locals from natural resources
-	Greater tolerance of social differences	_	New cliques modify social structure
-	Satisfaction of psychological needs	-	Natural, political, and public relations calamities

Source: Kreag, G., The impact of tourism, Minnesota Sea Grant, 2001., from http://www.seagrant.umn.edu/tourism/pdfs/ImpactsTourism.pdf (15.01.2013.)

Most commonly positive impact of tourism refers to economic impact. Tourism has received considerable attention in last decades because of its potential for regional economic development. This is more evident in communities where the economy is highly dependent on agrarian declining activities and has limited alternatives for economic growth. It is generally accepted that in the initial stage of tourism development the investigation of resident's perceptions is essential.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Golzardi, F., et al., Residents Attitudes towards Tourism Development: A Case Study of Niasar, Iran, Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology 4(8), Maxwell Scientific Organization, 2012., p. 863.

But however, the economic influence of tourism can also be negative for destinations as the prices in crease in real-estate property, goods and services as well as many others. In a broad context, progress of tourism development contributes to both profits and costs to local economy as higher demand from tourists will significantly influence an increment in prices and fees of tourism products and services offered in tourist destination.<sup>3</sup>

Resident's attitudes toward tourism have been a subject of research for more than 30 years.<sup>4</sup> Jafari<sup>5</sup> concluded that tourism research focused on the positive aspects of tourism impact since 1960s, the negative aspect since 1970s, and a more systematic approach in the 1980s. Some results of the studies in the past ten years referring to the residents' attitudes toward tourism are point out in the figure below.

Author(s)	Main findings reported		
Andriotis (2004)	Reliance on tourism and education level were found to strongly influence attitudes toward tourism. Economic, cultural and infrastructural benefits derives from tourism were important for residents'.		
Ritchie, Mikko (2006)	Although residents are generally supportive of tourism development and cultural tourism development, there are differences in opinion concerning the perceived economic and social benefits.		
Lepp (2007)	Results show residents have consistently positive attitudes towards tourism. Positive attitudes result from residents' belief that tourism creates community development, improves agricultural markets, generates income, and finally, that tourism brings random good fortune.		
Nicholas, Thapa and Ko (2009)	The notable lack of involvement of residents presented critical implications for the sustainability of the site.		
Sebastian, Rajagopalan (2009)	Residents perceive that tourism have increased alcoholism and immoral activities, brought undesired changes in the value orientation of children, alteres community structure due to large-scale out-migration and increased the price of essential food products.		
Aref, Fariborz (2010)	According to the results, the favorable attitudes are found to be linked with its sociocultural impacts, while environmental and economic matters are found to be the least favorable in terms of perceived impacts of tourism.		
Brida, Osti, Faccioali (2011)	Research has revealed recognition by the residents of the positive economic impacts of tourism. Social and cultural impacts are recognized to be positive but at lower degree.		
Marzuki (2012)	Local people will support tourism development in their society when they are expecting benefits from tourism activites.		
Simão, Môsso (2013)	There is a lack of public participation in the decision-making processes. In general, there is a support from the residents' to tourism development, but there are wearing signs that ought to be taken into consideration by planners and decision makers.		

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Marzuki, A., Local residents' perceptions towards economic impact of tourism development in Phuket, Tourism, Vol. 60., No. 2., Institut za turizam, Zagreb, 2012., p. 200.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Andereck, K. L., Vogt, C.A., The Relationship between Residents' Attitudes toward Tourism and Tourism Development Options, Journal of Travel Research, Vol. 39, Sage Publications, Inc., August 2000., pp. 27-28.
<sup>5</sup> Jafari, J., A Systemic View of Sociocultural Dimensions of Tourism, President' Commission on American Outdoors, Tourism, Washington DC, 1986., pp. 33-50.

The Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism issued in 1997 states the following: "...Tourism should be developed in a way so that it benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills. Mechanisms, including policies and legislation should be introduced to ensure the flow of benefits to local communities. Tourism activities should respect the ecological characteristics and capacity of the local environment in which they take place. All efforts should be made to respect traditional lifestyles and cultures..."<sup>6</sup>

Jelinčić considers that the impact of tourism on local residents can be seen through two situations:<sup>7</sup>

- 1. Tourism stimulates some of the positive characteristics of local behavior: it promotes self-consciousness, pride, self-confidence and solidarity among local residents; or
- 2. Tourism provokes dissatisfaction with the tourist's presence: it leads to boredom, opposition or even hate towards the tourist.

The arrival of the tourist to the destination it results with a direct contact between the tourist and the host, which leads to a string of oppositions that can be positive, negative or both. The positivity of that relationship manifests itself through a development of a sense of pride, richness of multiculturalism and preservation of their culture. In that point of view tourism has an important role in the preservation of local society culture.

Tourism destination is a starting point of a tourism culture which is inspired by tourism traveling, or tourism. The contact of the tourist and the host, De Kadt divided into next three general categories<sup>8</sup>:

- 1. when tourists purchase goods from the host,
- 2. when tourists and local residents share space, such as a beach, a train or a bus, restaurant or a bar,
- 3. when tourists and hosts meet with the primary goal of cultural exchange.

In this categorization, the first two types of contact are most commonly connected to negative aspects, while the third one is considered positive.

Tourism encourages a process in which it comes to mixing of cultures in which tourists influence the local residents and vice-versa. In that process the influence of the tourist should be minimal, that is, the tourist, as a guest, ought's to accept with respect and adapt the culture of the local residents to avoid disturbance of the balance and conflicts, as well as stress.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism, http://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/MDB/ documents/03140 (02.02.2014.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Jelinčić, D. A., Turizam vs. Identitet: globalizacija i tradicija, Etnološka istraživanja, Vol. 1., No. 11., Etnografski muzej, Zagreb, 2006., p. 165.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> De Kadt, E., Social planning for tourism in the developing countries, Annals of Tourism Research, 1979., 6(1), 36-45., inTimothy, D. J., Boyd, S. W., Heritage tourism, Pearson Education Limited, England, 2003., p. 181.

## 2. LOCAL RESIDENTS AS A PART OF THE DESTINATION PRODUCT

Local residents present an undividable part of the destination product. Local residents should be treated with respect, and their concerns and ideas have to bead dressed. That way the negative impacts of tourism will decrease. If residents are empowered to determine their own futures, they will be less inclined to criticize development effort.<sup>9</sup> It is necessary to accomplish for the destination product quality, because any resistance of the local residents toward tourism will reflect on the decreased quality of the destination product.

Timothy and Boyd consider that public participation in tourism development by the community can be seen in two ways:<sup>10</sup>

- 1. participation indecision-making
- 2. participation in the benefits of tourism.

Participation in decision-making means that residents have opportunities to voice their own hopes, desires and fears<sup>11</sup> for tourism development and contribute to the planning process from their own expertise and experiences. Involving the local residents into the planning process and making decisions about the development of tourism is not simple, but is necessary. It is very important that the local resident wants to be included, what means that there is a certain level of consciousness and sensibility of the local residents toward the tourism development.

Although residents may initially resist externally based tourism development initiatives, the subsequent feedback and interaction between developers and community organizations could provide an appreciative dialogue necessary for collaborative implementation of tourism.<sup>12</sup> According to these statements given by Hwang, Stewart and Ko it can be assumed that even in the case of negative reaction amoung local residents', channeling them into collective action my lead to positive effects both for the community and tourism.

Community-based tourism planning should also include creating opportunities for people to own businesses, to work in industry-related employment, to receive training and to be educated about the role and effects of heritage tourism in the regions.<sup>13</sup> Goodwin and Jasper defined community-based action as the activities residents pursue to address issues of community identity and solidarity. That is, the community works together – or at least negotiates as fragmented groups – through collaboration of residents and their organization.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Timothy, D. J., Boyd, S. W., Heritage tourism, Pearson Education Limited, England, 2003., p. 181.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Timothy, D. J., Boyd, S. W., Heritage tourism, Pearson Education Limited, England, 2003., p. 181.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p.182.

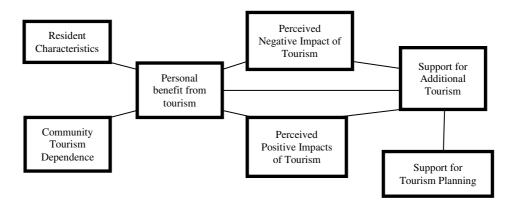
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Hwang, D., et al., Community Behavior and Sustainable Rural Tourism Development, Journal of Travel Research, Sage Publications, March 2012., p. 329.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Timothy, D. J., Boyd, S. W., Heritage tourism, Pearson Education Limited, England, 2003., p. 182.
<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 329.

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The next figure shows a model of support local community for tourism development which was projected by Perdue, Long and Allen in 1990. The Perdue, Longand Allan model utilizes regression analysis as a way to measure the interactive effects of various personal characteristics of respondents, the influence of those characteristics on impact perceptions, and the influence of personal characteristics and perceptions on support for tourism development.<sup>15</sup>

## Figure 3: Local community model of support for tourism development



Source: McGehee, N. G., Andereck, K. L., Factors predicting rural residents' support of tourism, Journal of Travel Research, Sage Publications, October 2004., p. 133.

In order to identify the perceptions of residents toward major tourist attractions most often is used the personal construct theory (PSC). Originally conceived by Kelly in 1955s as s technique in clinical psychology, this theory is based on the proposition that individuals generate and constantly reassess their own personal expectations about the nature of people or places in which they interact directly or vicariously. The PCT involves the personal schema that individuals construct to make sense of and function within the world.<sup>16</sup>

One of the ways of determining the role of the local residents in tourism development is the usage of social exchange theory (SET), first applied in tourism by Ap 1990s. Ap suggested a theoretical framework, namely the social exchange theory, to capture the motivations that lead residents to have positive or negative attitude towards tourism.<sup>17</sup>

SET has been used in sociology, anthropology, social psychology, marketing, communication and information science. The theory proposed by Thibaut and Kelley in 1959 was originally posited by John Stuart Mill, the philosopher, political theory stand

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> McGehee, N. G., Andereck, K. L., Factors predicting rural residents' support of tourism, Journal of Travel Research, Sage Publications, October 2004., p. 132.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Lawton, L.J., Resident Perceptions of Tourist Attractions on the Gold Coas tof Australia, Journal of Travel Research, Sage Publications, November 2005., p. 190.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Brida, J.G., et al., Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Impacts and Attitudes Towards Tourism Policies in a Small Mountain Community (May 12, 2011). Benchmarking: An International Journal, Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1839244 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1839244 (15.02.2014.)

economist, in 1863 in his famous book Utilitarianism. The central tenet of SET is that a basic form of human interaction is the exchange of social and material resources and that people always want to maximize the value of their exchange outcome.<sup>18</sup>

From a tourism perspective, the SET means that residents examine costs and benefits as a result of tourism, if their assessment is positive, also their attitude towards this type of industry will be positive. Therefore, residents perceiving more positive (benefits) than negative (costs) effects arising from tourism are likely to support the exchange and are likely to be inclined to be involved in the exchange.<sup>19</sup>

## 3. ANALASYS OF THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL OF THE SPECIFIC FORMS OF TOURISM IN SLAVONIA

The space that Slavonia covers is the most valuable economical resource in Croatian agricultural economy. Slavonia is an area of fruitful lowlands and vineyard hills, rivers, swamps, bog lands and indescribable natural beauties, rich flora and fauna. But, regardless of its richness and possibilities, Slavonia as a tourist destination, especially of specific forms of tourism, is in long-term stagnation, all doe the advantages that would make it competitive as a region on the tourism market are not questionable at all.

According to the statistic information, all those resources make Slavonia a perfect candidate not just for specific form of tourism, but also for industrial development whose products are located in tourism offer of entire Croatia, such as beer industry, chocolate industry and alike.

Four to five years ago a more intensive growth started and the investment in tourism increased, but without solid strategic planning. The initiatives were taken by small entrepreneurship focused on pensions and hotels construction, with the capacity of twenty to thirty beds, mainly focused on rural tourism development. The reason for not getting the wanted results is an important question on which can only be responded by exploration of diverse elements of tourism demand, but also preferences and needs of local residents.

## 3.1. Methodology

In the aim of stagnation reasons research, and determining the possible goals and solutions for inducement of development, a survey with the local residents has been conducted. The survey was conducted over a group of 40 examinees. During data collection, stratified random sampling approach was used to select the respondents that represent the whole group of population that lives there, regardless of the age, education and other characteristics of the examinees. Survey based on the questionnaire was carried out in November 2013, in the small rural city of Požega, county Slavonija

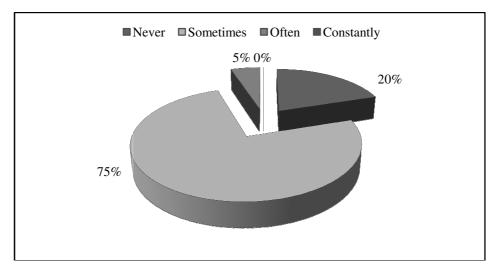
 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Choi, H.C., Murray, I., Resident attitudes toward sustainable community tourism, Journal of Sustainable tourism, Routledge, London, 2010., pp. 576-577.
<sup>19</sup> Brida, J.G., et al., Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Impacts and Attitudes Towards Tourism Policies in a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Brida, J.G., et al., Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Impacts and Attitudes Towards Tourism Policies in a Small Mountain Community (May 12, 2011). Benchmarking: An International Journal, Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1839244 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1839244 (15.02.2014.)

in Croatia. The primary goal of the survey was to determine opinions of the local residents about their own city of residence as a tourism destination, their stands of the main advantages and weaknesses of the tourism offer in the destination and the possibilities of tourism market placement.

## 3.2. Evaluation of the satisfaction with the local facilities

Tourism facilities that are offered to the local residents are an important element of influence on the general satisfaction and happiness index of the residents. Also, the simplicity and usage of those facilities determine the quality of time for leisure. With that primary purpose, facilities make an excellent way of entertainment, and by that those are also the elements of tourism offer that will affect the choice of destination which the tourist will visit. Without the local facilities, the destination itself loses its identity and the adjectives that declare it as a tourism destination. During the research the local residents showed insignificant usage of local facilities, including the sport grounds, parks, playgrounds and similar spaces intended for everyday leisure. Only 75% of the examinees declared that they sometimes use the facilities, and just 5% of them replied that they use the facilities often, until none of the examinees confirmed a constant usage of facilities. The mentioned results are shown by figure 3.



#### Figure 4: Frequency of local facilities usage

Source: Analysis of the authors according to the date from the conducted research of the local residents, 2013

The result can point to a preposition that the facilities are idle due to low development quality, that is, the facilities are inconsistent to the demand. That conclusion can be explained with the fact that 75% of examinees who sometimes use the facilities are aged from 18 to 24, what brings the question of insufficient offer and quality facilities for older age groups.

The same thing can be seen from the evaluation of the events offered, where older groups mostly rated the tourism manifestations and event with high grades, while the younger generations showed low interest for local tourism events. That brings us to the same problem, this time turned to the youth, whose needs for leisure demand modernization of the manifestations in the terms of richer and wider offer of additional facilities and events, such as contests, tournaments, games and such.

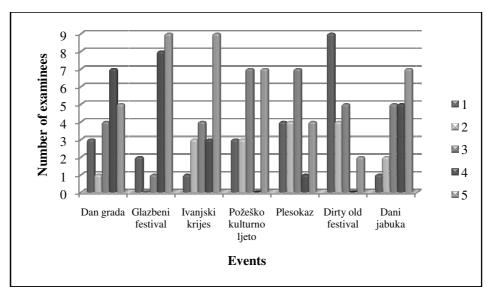


Figure 5: Events evaluation

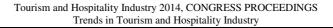
Source: Analysis of the authors according to the date from the conducted research of the local residents, 2013

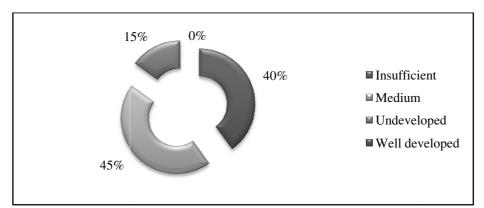
Analysis of the grated tourism events included seven main manifestations of the city Požega, during which the examinees rated the quality of the events with grades from one (1) to five (5), considering that 1 is the lowest value, and 5 being the highest value. From the figure above, it can be seen that the event called 'Glazbeni festival Slavonije' or free translated The Music Festival of Slavonia, was the highest rated event, with 45% of examinees that grated it with the highest grade (5).

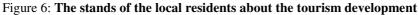
Among the events, the lowest rated was 'DOF' or the Dirty Old Festival, which had 45% of grades 1 and only 10% of grades 5. The situation was opposite from the music festival.

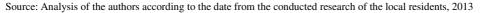
# **3.3.** Tourism development and the involvement of local residents in the development

Local residents and their perception of the city they live in is a great indicator for research. Concerning the question of the opinion of the local residents about the development of city Požega, the results showed devastating, but realistic data, what can be seen from the following figure.









The figure shows that not even one examinee considers that city Požega is a well developed tourism destination, while even 85% of them considers the city to be insufficiently or medially developed, and 15% examinees think that city is not developed at all.

The analysis of the stands about the potential for tourism development also showed important information. Concerning the potential, 75% of examinees consider that Požega has tourism potential, in all specific forms of tourism, and also, 90% of them think that tourism development would have a positive impact on the community wellbeing in general.

More about stands of the potential can be seen from the figure 6 which clearly shows that there are possibilities for tourism development in many segments based on the answers of the residents, which in this question was a multi choice.

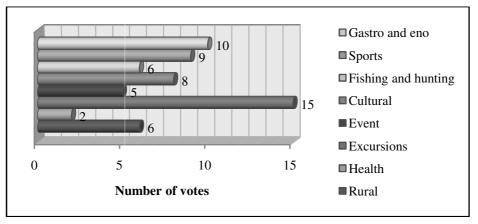


Figure 7: Perception of potential destination

Source: Analysis of the authors according to the date from the conducted research of the local residents, 2013

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The largest number of examinees, 75% of them, in city Požega recognizes a potential as a destination for excursions, while half of them considers Požega ideal for development as a gastro-eno destination.

It is interesting information that only 30% of residents recognized the rural city of Požega as a potential rural destination, which only confirms low level of promotion of rural tourism as an important tourism form in general. Rural tourism is a relatively new concept for Slavonian resident in the term of potential image, but that has to change in order to valorize the rich development possibilities for rural tourism on that area, but in the entire region as well.

The lowest number of examinees, only 10% of them considers Požega a potential destination for health tourism, which implies the same absence of awareness for trends in tourism.

Next figure shows results of the research of the involvement of the residents in decisions making for development of Požega.

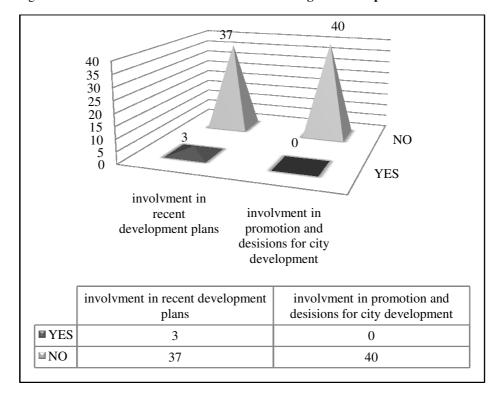


Figure 8: Involvment of residents in decision making for development

Source: Analysis of the authors according to the date from the conducted research of the local residents, 2013

Evaluation of involvement level of the local residents into the development plans, as well as their knowledge of the recent decisions, showed the expected result, a complete absence of the local residents from the decisions in development strategies. Only 7% of residents feel aware of the recent plans, while 100% of them feel that they are not included in the promotion and not consulted while making crucial decisions for the city.

That information effects negatively on the question of the future development because involvement of the local resident in the flow of development is understated concerning that the increase of the quality of their lives is proportional to the development of the destination. Accordingly, the involvement of the residents is a crucial question of every successful development process that needs to be taken in consideration.

## 3.4. The attractiveness of the location

When attractiveness of the location is in question, local residents rated their city with an average grade of 3,78. The highest grades were given for health, unpolluted air, the absence of noise, that is, quality of the natural environment and preserved natural resources, while the lowest grated were road infrastructural and telecommunication connectivity, as well as the hospitality and restaurant offer. The telecommunication connectivity points out an important issue for Slavonia as well as for most of decentralized parts of Croatia. Today's tourist movements demand a good connectivity, especially concerning the internet, but in Croatia, excellent connectivity is a privilege of larger cities such as Rijeka and Zagreb, while some suburban areas, smaller cities and decentralized areas have no internet access at all.

Figure 9:	The attractiveness	of Požega
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ATTRACTIVENESS ELEMENT	RATING
Healthy climate (unpolluted air and water)	4,6
Absence of noise	4,4
Preserved socio-cultural elements	4,0
Possibility of movement around the area	4,6
Facilities for fun, sport and recreation	3,6
Manifestations and events	3,7
Road and telecommunication infrastructure	3,2
General attractiveness of the location	3,4
Restaurants and accommodation	3,1
Traditional activities and food offer	3,2

Source: Analysis of the authors according to the date from the conducted research of the local residents, 2013

The last question in the survey gives the best insight to the general stands of the local residents. To the question "Would you recommend your city as a tourism destination?", 70% of residents answer yes, and 30% of them said no, because they consider that Požega at the moment is not attractive enough as a tourist destination, and that is why they would not personally recommend it to tourists.

Insights provided by this research lead to an obvious neglect of the importance of specific forms of tourism, as well as the means of general development for the region, and as a direct consequence of that, also and the deficiency of tourism offer in Croatia. The citizens are still not included enough in the tourism development, which results with a lack of knowledge, practice and motivation for rural tourism development, making it's grow impossible.

For making development possible and probable, it is necessary to implement education programs and support measures, as well as impulse of rural economy and amplify the offer of specific forms of tourism. It is also important to create a promotion plan, to update the recent promotion that is not adapted to the modern tourism demand, by expanding promotion channels to internet media and social networks.

## CONCLUSION

The influence of tourism in the tourism destination can be tracked through changes on natural and infrastructural resources, but also through the changes in local residents everyday life. Those changes can be positive as well as negative so it is important to include local residents into the tourism development flows of the destination. Especially because of the fact that local residents are a part of the integral destination product and from the level of their satisfaction depends the quality of the tourism product. The need for involving the local residents points out in the processes of the development of the tourism offer which can influence their lives, and would include active involvement of the local residents into the decision making process starting with the planning to the formation of the final product. Conducted research showed some interesting results and opinions of the local residents about important tourism questions. City Požega belongs to the region of Croatia which is rich with natural tourism resources, but insufficiently used in the tourism offer. The research showed that one of the reasons for that is the low progress in raising awareness of the citizens about the tourism potential their destination has. Result analysis showed that most of the citizens are not pleased with the facilities offered in this city, and consider them not adapted to the modern demand. That fact is connected by the 85% of residents who considers Požega undeveloped as a tourism destination, also by the 100% of residents that declared themselves as not familiar with the decision making or involved in the development process. If the residents of Požega would be consulted, they would present Požega as a tourism destination for excursions and gastro tourism, and also in small groups Požega is seen as a destination of rural and health tourism. That small group also point out the fact that rural tourism is not as known to the residents as a possibility for development and growth as it should be. The fact that should be pointed out is that residents see Požega as an extremely attractive tourism destination which they would gladly recommend to tourists, but while rating the attraction of the city, the

lowest graded were precisely the tourism infrastructural facilities. As it was pointed on the example used in the research, a large significance and impact on the perception of the tourism destination, its development and attractiveness have the local residents. The local residents are the element that makes the tourism offer unique and unrepeatable. Besides the natural and infrastructural beauties, the residents are those who give life to the destination, and that has to be the reason to actively involve local residents into the decisions that directly or indirectly affect their lives through frames of tourism.

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