

IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC MANAGING IN DEVELOPMENT A COMPETITIVE EVENT TOURISM OFFER

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Abstract

Purpose – Over the years numerous world destinations have recognized the advantages of organizing events and manifestations, and have focused their efforts towards that direction in order to expand their tourist offer and make it, as well as the destination, more competitive and recognizable. As a country with a long tourist tradition, rich cultural-historical heritage, etc., Croatia still hasn't reached the true level of competitiveness of its (event) tourism offer, despite its potential as well as the activities undertaken until now. The purpose of this paper is to present the characteristics and current state of the offer of tourist events in the Republic of Croatia, as well to propose strategic guidelines for its future development.

Methodology – The authors have conducted an analysis of the scientific literature, as well as the available secondary data.

Findings – The paper presents possibility of development of a competitive event tourism offer in Croatia, based on its natural, cultural-historical and other particularities. Its successful development will result in increase of the tourist turnover, and reduction of the seasonality in Croatian tourism. New theoretical findings in strategic managing and application of positive practical experiences will ensure growth of recognizability and competitiveness of Croatia as a tourist destination.

Contribution – Contribution of this paper manifests in increasing the understanding of importance of event tourism and strategies in its development, as well as how its successful development can positively influence on the preservation of Croatian tradition and through that the improvement of total Croatian tourist offer

Keywords: event tourism, strategies, strategic management, competitiveness, Croatia

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, cultural manifestations and special events form one of the sectors that record the fastest growth and development within the tourism industry. Many tourism organizations have made the organization of festivals and special events a part of their destination marketing and development strategies, recognizing that many events have the potential to attract visitors to the destination, generate media attention, build a trademark of a destination and enhance the economy. Steps that precede these success factors are, amongst other, to explore the needs, motives, and benefits of potential visitors with the purpose of designing events that meet the needs of visitors as well as the requirements of the organizers and sponsors (Milohnic 2012, 51). Events are an essential tool for the tourism development process and their contribution is not limited to the increase in the number of visitors, thus generating income and business, they also

enable a complete drive of the tourism production chain, besides helping to minimize the effects of seasonality, since they stimulate the flow of people in times of the year when the demand is usually lower. It becomes essential to achieve the compromise between public and private sector for the success of the events, and cultural events have lately proved to be very a dynamic "tourist product". Consequently, festivals are a model of cultural organization, also providing an approach to the policy of local authorities or to strategic patronage options of companies enhancing opportunities to promote prestigious image of institutions, groups and professionals, as well as the places that host them (Coelho and Brazio, 2014, 117). Festivals and events play an important role in tourism and hospitality industry for two major reasons. First, they create memories and stories, highlight mundane everyday experience, elevate people's spirit, and celebrate human existence. Second, festivals and events contribute to the economic income for the local people in a city, region, or a country (Cheng 2013). Visitors to a festival or event stay in paid accommodations, dine out in restaurants, participate in group activities, and purchase souvenirs-another way of creating long lasting memories and meanings. The inflow of money will create jobs and stimulate the local economy. Festivals and events offer spiritual, sociological, and economic contribution to the tourism and hospitality industry (Huan 2013, 115). In current economic climate festivals play an important role for towns, cities and regions. Festivals are considered to contribute significantly to the cultural and economic development and wealth of a destination (Raj and Vignali 2010, 51). Hernández-Mogollón et al (2014, 84) stress the positive impact of tourist events on a place or a region by generating economic profit based on the income from the sale of products and services of different activities connected to the event, by increasing the tourist turnover which improves the quality of restaurants and infrastructure.

The paper structure is as follows: after the introduction, in the first part the authors provide the theoretical considerations how event tourism contributes in achieving competitiveness of a tourist destination on the tourist market. The second part is divided into three sub-chapters and presents the event tourism of the Republic of Croatia, respectively case studies of Rapska Fjera, Rijeka Carnival and the Advent in Zagreb. In the third part the authors give proposal of strategic activities for development of Croatian event tourism. Finally, in the fourth part research results and findings are presented, as well as the limitations of research and directions for further research.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVENT TOURISM IN ACHIEVING COMPETITIVENESS ON THE TOURIST MARKET

Over the years event tourism achieved a significant development, and became an important element of a contemporary tourist offer. Events are both animators of destination attractiveness but more fundamentally as key marketing propositions in the promotion of places given the increasingly global competitiveness to attract visitor spending (Getz and Page 2016, 593). Creation of a tourism offer which promotes customer satisfaction is characterized by a wide range of tourist attractions as a part of tourism events. Events in tourism, as part of tourism offer, are also an important element in satisfying customer needs. A satisfied customer will likely be spending

more, revisit the place, and its recommendations will influence the arrival of other guests in tourism destination. This is the reason for the continuous monitoring system of advantages and disadvantages of tourism offer, i.e. destination events as an important element of that offer (Milohnic et al. 2012, 4). Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. They have also other important roles to play, from community-building to urban renewal, cultural development to fostering national identities-tourism is not the only partner or proponent (Getz 2008, 403). Previously mentioned points that event tourism represents one of the most important elements of a contemporary tourist offer, respectively, successful development of its offer can significantly improve the competitive positioning of a destination on a tourist market. Creating a competitive advantage, and subsequently sustaining it over a period of time, requires a formal approach in terms of strategy formation and implementation. The destination management should engage in constant evaluation of the destination's market position, including benchmarking, that enables it to develop a strategic perspective to the value creation process (Okumus, Altinay and Chathoth, 2010). As a country rich in natural, cultural-historical, and numerous other resources, Croatia possesses high potential for development of a competitive event tourism offer on the European and world tourist market. This will result in increasing the tourist turnover throughout the year (reduction of seasonality), achieving higher level of recognizability of Croatian (tourist) identity, as well as the level of competitiveness on the tourist market.

Managing of event tourism development is gaining on importance on a daily basis, which is being witnessed by numerous research papers and projects prepared by scientists and practitioners of various profiles all over the world. The primary goal of these efforts is to find the best possible scientific and practical solutions which will enable better understanding where to go, respectively, where to focus in developing a successful and competitive offer of event tourism. Blesic et al (2014) tried to determine how event tourism, as a selective form of tourism, is contributing to the regional development of tourism in Sombor and Apatin municipalities in Serbia. According to the results of their research, the primary impact for the local population achieved by the organization of events is the economic factor (possibility to earn extra income as well as increasing the level of life standard), followed by socialization among people of various nations and cultures, etc. These results can be utilized by the organizers in order to increase social benefits generated by the festival, to reduce negative social impacts and to contribute to better quality of life in Sombor and Apatin. Petrevska and Jakovlev (2015) analyze how (event) tourism contributes to the economic development of the Eastern region of the Republic of Macedonia. Their findings indicated a positive interaction between regional tourism events and tourism development of the region, as well as the possibility for increasing the level of regional growth, primarily by introducing new tourism events, and boosting the current modest event tourism development. Egresi and Kara (2014) researched the impact of small events in achieving economic impact on Istanbul as a tourist destination. The events were an international film festival, an international jazz day and concert by an international pop star which took place in Istanbul in April and May 2013. In their research they identified that tourists who attend small festivals invest money in the community, by (sometimes multiple) buying of tickets to the shows, staying in local hotels and private accommodation, as well as eating in local restaurants and shopping

in local stores. However, due to the small number of tourists, they determined that their economic contribution was minimal. According to this study, almost 50% of the respondents came to Istanbul especially due to the pop concert, while only 27% of the respondents visited Istanbul due to the film festival. By doing this they managed to confirm the McKercher et al.'s (2006) study that the majority of tourists attending small events learn about the event while visiting the destination. They concluded that stronger marketing activities abroad are essential for achieving higher number of visits of small festivals and events in Istanbul throughout the year. Milohnic (2012) determined that culture is important for motivated visitors, despite the fact that most of the journeys due to the culture are a part of a holiday. The dominant motive for visitors of cultural events is the desire to gain new knowledge about the culture, history and heritage of a tourist destination. In the context of sport events, Buning and Gibson (2016) explored the influence of travel conditions on preferred destination, event, and travel characteristics in the context of Active-Sport-Event Travel Careers. Smolcic-Jurdana (2012) emphasized that events do not only attempt to prevent destination's stagnation or decline, but that they also present the destination with additional attraction attributes, respectively, improvement of city's image or complete change of the image.

2. EVENT TOURISM OFFER OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

As previously mentioned in the paper, over the years events became an inevitable part of a contemporary tourist offer on European and world level. European countries have particularly recognized its potential and invested significant efforts in its development, in order to gain socio-economic and other use. For Croatia, as an EU member, event tourism represents one of the most perspective elements of tourist offer, considering that it possesses a tradition of organizing events of various types (sports, cultural, etc.).

The Institute for Tourism in Zagreb has recognized the necessity of determining the state of Croatian tourism by conducting various researches such as TOMAS Summer, TOMAS Yachting, etc. However, so far no researches focused directly on event tourism were conducted. Following, the authors will present the selected parts of TOMAS Summer Research, which are related to the offer of event tourism. The TOMAS Summer researches were conducted in the summer period June – September in years 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2014 in the following coastal counties: Istria, Primorje-Gorski kotar, Lika-Senj, Zadar, Sibenik-Knin, Split-Dalmatia, and Dubrovnik-Neretva. The method of personal interview was used in these researches, and all the statistical samples were representative (4,476 respondents in 2004; 4,915 respondents in 2007; 4,973 respondents in 2010 and 4,035 respondents in 2014).

Table 1: Motives of tourist's arrival to Croatia

	2004	2007	2010	2014	2014/ 2004
New experiences	24.6	25.5	25.3	29.9	+5.3%
Getting acquainted with the cultural sights and events	6.0	9.8	7.1	6.6	+0.6%

Source: TOMAS Summer 2004, Tomas Summer 2007, TOMAS Summer 2010 and TOMAS Summer 2014

As stated in the previous table, it is evident that the tourists are constantly seeking for new and unique experiences, which is visible in the growth of this motive for 5.3% in a ten year period. Getting acquainted with the cultural sights and the events has a significantly smaller share in the motives for visiting Croatia, respectively, in a ten year period it achieved a growth of only 0.6%.

Table 2: Activities during stay in Croatia

	2004	2007	2010	2014	2014/ 2004
Visits to the theatre and manifestations	29.8	37.6	24.3	23.1	-6.7%
Visits to the concerts	38.7	47.4	39.4	30.7	-8.0%
Visits to the museums and exhibitions	43.0	47.6	39.3	34.9	-8.1%

Source: TOMAS Summer 2004, Tomas Summer 2007, TOMAS Summer 2010 and TOMAS Summer 2014

The data in the previous table indicate a decrease in the activities during stay in Croatia which are connected with the event tourism offer. In a ten year period the following tourist's activities achieved a decrease: visits to the theatre and manifestations (-6.7%), visits to concerts (-8.0%) and visits to the museums and exhibitions (-8.1%).

Table 3: Level of satisfaction with the elements of tourist offer

	2004	2007	2010	2014
Quality of information in the destination	Very low	Medium	High	Medium
Diversity of cultural manifestations	Very low	Low	Medium	Low

Source: TOMAS Summer 2004, Tomas Summer 2007, TOMAS Summer 2010 and TOMAS Summer 2014

The data in the previous table indicates on the low level of satisfaction of tourists with the diversity of cultural manifestations as well as the quality of providing the information in the destination. This indicates the necessity of strengthening the involvement of destination management in improving the existing and developing the offer of new events, in order to satisfy the basic motive of contemporary tourist's visit, respectively, the need for something new, until now unexperienced.

The reasons why the authors chose to present the previous data from TOMAS Summer research are twofold: a) In Croatian tourism its summer period is still the most active period during which the highest share of tourist turnover is achieved. Also, certain elements of tourist offer which were evaluated in this research present the level of satisfaction of tourists with the event tourism offer in the summer period in destinations where the research was conducted; b) there is a lack of available data which present the state of event tourism on the level of the Republic of Croatia. Until now no researches on event tourism were conducted on state level, unlike until now successfully conducted TOMAS Summer, and similar researches by the Institute of Tourism in Zagreb, which contribute significantly in determining the state of Croatian tourism. This indicates the necessity of introducing new research projects in this field with a goal of further development of Croatian event tourism.

In order to determine current state of Croatian event tourism, and to propose further actions necessary for its successful development, Institute for Tourism and similar scientific institutions should introduce new research projects strictly focused on event tourism.

Previously presented results are unsatisfactory, meaning, further developmental activities need to be created and applied. Its future development needs to be stimulated and ensured through conducting adequate tourist planning and strategic performance on the tourist market, while undertaking marketing activities and application of state of the art marketing tools, with a goal of repositioning of event tourist offer in the Republic of Croatia (Alkier, Drpic and Milošević 2015). Following, the authors will present three events which represent an important part of Croatian event tourist offer.

2.1. Medieval summer Festival "Rapska fjera"

Medieval Summer Festival "Rapska fjera" is founded on the historical basis of municipality's feast Rab vacations (orig. Rapske ferije), declared by the Great Council of the city of Rab (Congregata generali consilio) on July 21st 1364 in honor of King Ljudevit the Great, the liberator of Rab from Venetians and in honor of appreciation of power of St. Christopher, the protector of the city of Rab, with a goal of nurturing, stimulating and improving medieval heritage through protection of cultural assets, particularly Rab's original crafts and traditional values. The opening of the festival always begins on July 25th on the holiday of St. Jacob with a pageant of all participants through Upper Street and Bobotina and ends on the St. Christopher Square. This event always ends on July 27th, on the holiday of St. Christopher, with the organization of Knight's Tournament by the Association of Rab bowmen, and finally a midnight firework. Fjera is a top cultural manifestation which in days of municipal public festivities gathers thousands of participants from Rab and towns all over Europe. During the Fjera the city of Rab turns into a big stage on which many citizens and their friends from San Marino (city of Monte Giardino) and other European and Croatian cities present old arts and crafts while wearing picturesque costumes. Thousands of visitors gather along with the costumed participants and participate in this big folk spectacle (Baric 2007). In order to present the tourist turnover achieved during Rapska Fjera, following tourist arrivals and overnights in 2010 – 2014 will be presented.

Table 4: **Tourist arrivals in the period of Rapska Fjera 2010 – 2014**

	Tourist arrivals				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Foreign	4,657	4,708	3,150	5,194	6,042
Domestic	663	662	546	642	727
Total	5,320	5,370	3,696	5,836	6,769

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Rab, <http://www.rab-visit.com/hr>

Table 5: **Tourist overnights in the period of Rapska Fjera 2010 – 2014**

	Tourist overnights				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Foreign	41,405	39,901	40,630	41,361	34,692
Domestic	5,719	5,224	4,813	4,792	5,184
Total	47,124	45,125	45,443	46,153	39,876

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Rab, <http://www.rab-visit.com/hr>

Previous tables present the achieved tourist arrivals and overnights during Rapska Fjera in the period 2010 – 2014. According to the data, there was a growth in total tourist arrivals (with an exception in the year 2012) of 27.24%. The highest number of tourist arrivals is achieved by foreign tourists. In terms of achieved total overnights in this period, oscillations were registered. If we compare registered total overnights in 2014 with those in 2010, we can see that there was a decrease of 15.38%.

2.2. Rijeka Carnival

Events which are based on historical facts constitute a strong connection between the present and the past of a particular region, but also an opportunity for strengthening the cognitive values and identity (Stipanovic, Rudan and Persin, 2015, 355). Carnival represents a period of masking, individually and jointly. Masks and disguises enable for people to briefly change their identity, it provides them a temporary freedom from everyday roles and problems (Lozica 1997, 11). Carnival customs are channeled by the calendar and provide a planned political vent, an annual overall cleansing of the community, a catharsis that enables a new beginning (or, at least, the semblance of the commencement of a new annual cycle in society, in harmony with astronomical and vegetative rhythm) (Lozica 1997). Over the centuries this event has experienced numerous changes, but in the new world the carnival hasn't lost its power of cultural adaptation, it melted together with the local cults and festivities (Lozica 1997).

Carnivals have an important place in the world Tourist industry (Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, Mardi Gras in New Orleans USA, Carnival in Venice, Italy, Carnival in Rijeka, Croatia, etc.) and are very attractive to tourists. The city of Rijeka possesses a rich offer of events which are organized throughout the year (cultural, sports, etc.). One of the most important events is the famous Rijeka Carnival. This event has a rich historical background, and has tremendously developed over the years. The presence of today's Rijeka Carnival was brought to life in 1982 by three masked groups: Halubaj

Bellringers, Pehlin Festari, and the group Lako cemo. The full potential of revival and further development of this event was immediately recognized by the employees of the Tourist Board of Rijeka. Their hard work resulted in great success, respectively, quality and uniqueness of the carnival was recognized on European level; Rijeka Carnival received a full membership of FECC-Federation of European Carnival Cities in 1995. Numerous participants from Croatia and abroad participate in it, and arrange their holiday and free time just so they could participate in this colorful event (Dmitrovic and Mrkic Modric 2013). In order to present the participation of tourists and domestic population in Rijeka Carnival, the authors will present the following statistical indicators.

Table 6: Number of children participants in Rijeka Carnival in the period 2010 – 2016

	Participants	Carnival groups
2010	5,000	76
2011	6,000	76
2012	5,200	69
2013	4,500	65
2014	5,000	72
2015	4,900	61
2016	5,000	69

Source: Rijeka Carnival, <http://www.rijecki-karneval.hr/info/Rijeckikarnevalubrojka>

According to the previous table it can be concluded that the number of children participants quotes around 5000, while number of groups quotes around 70 groups.

Table 7: Number of international participants in Rijeka Carnival in the period 2010 – 2016

	Participants	Carnival groups	Allegorical wagon
2010	8,000	94	73
2011	9,000	107	73
2012	8,500	97	73
2013	8,300	100	70
2014	10,100	117	81
2015	10,000	112	80
2016	10,000	110	73

Source: Rijeka Carnival, <http://www.rijecki-karneval.hr/info/Rijeckikarnevalubrojka>

According to the data from the previous table, oscillations were present in the number of participants in the period 2010 – 2013, while in the year 2014 there was an increase. In 2015 and 2016 there was a small decrease. Oscillations were also present when monitoring the participation of carnival groups and allegorical wagons.

Table 8: Tourist arrivals in the period of Rijeka Carnival 2010 – 2016

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Foreign	1,285	2,513	1,579	1,275	2,896	2,402	2,306
Domestic	1,627	2,585	1,495	1,232	2,674	2,369	2,048
Total	2,912	5,098	3,074	2,507	5,570	4,771	4,354

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Rijeka, <http://www.visitrijeka.hr/>

According to the registered tourist arrivals in the period of Rijeka Carnival in 2010 – 2016, it is evident that there was a growth in 2011, after which the arrivals decreased until 2014 when an increase was registered. In 2015 and 2016 there was a decrease of arrivals. If we compare the achieved total arrivals in 2016 with those in 2010, it is evident that there was a growth of 49.52 %.

Table 9: Tourist overnights in the period of Rijeka Carnival 2010 – 2016

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Foreign	2,921	5,163	4,583	2,821	5,870	6,013	4,987
Domestic	2,673	4,923	2,825	2,179	4,805	4,757	4,642
Total	5,594	10,086	7,408	5,000	10,675	10,770	9,629

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Rijeka, <http://www.visitrijeka.hr/>

In terms of achieved overnights during Rijeka Carnival in the period 2010 – 2016, there was a significant growth of total overnights in the year 2011, followed by a decrease until the years 2014 and 2015 when an increase was registered. In 2016 there was a moderate decrease. If we compare achieved overnights in 2016 with the year 2010, there was an increase of high 72.13%.

According to the Rijeka Tourist Board, in 2016 the financial effects of Rijeka Carnival are visible in the increased turnover in the activity of providing accommodation and food and beverage services (an increase of 5% was expected in relation to the last years 6,444,715 Croatian Kuna), as well as increase of income of stores which sell props for carnival groups, etc.

2.3. The Advent in the city of Zagreb

The Advent in Zagreb is being organized since the year 2000, and in 2010 it was significantly expanded and branded. It has been developed intensively within the past couple of years in the synergy of municipal authorities and offices, Concert Direction of Zagreb and the Tourist Board of Zagreb. The initiator of the promotion campaign was the promotion film Advent in Zagreb which was used when appearing at fairs, congress marketplaces, business workshops, and was distributed to all the newspapers and the agents who visited Zagreb through organized trips. During the Advent numerous everyday activities and manifestations create a unique picture of the main city during the holidays, and intensive marketing activities are undertaken in this period of time. The project Advent in Zagreb is jointly financed by the Tourist Board of Zagreb and organizers of individual manifestations. The Tourist Board is completely

financing the costs of the promotion abroad; it conducts media campaigns in the surrounding countries over the internet (Google Adwords, banners, Facebook, etc.), it rents the add areas (depending on the campaign billboards, city lights and surfaces on the public transport are rented), and through individual activities such as presentations on fairs, etc. Besides promotion, Tourist Board of Zagreb also partially covers costs of organizing the Advent events; it provides a financial support to the organizers of greater manifestations. The organizer of the manifestation is responsible for other sources of financing. As a result of these worthy efforts, the following tourist arrivals and overnights were achieved in the city of Zagreb in the Advent period in 2011 – 2015.

Table 10: **Tourist arrivals in December 2011 – 2015 in the city of Zagreb**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Foreign	22,470	25,131	29,421	36,790	43,545
Domestic	14,974	14,281	16,909	19,547	27,925
Total	37,444	39,412	46,330	56,337	71,470

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Zagreb, <http://www.infozagreb.hr/>

Data in the previous table presents the achieved tourist arrivals in December in the period 2011 – 2015. If we compare the arrivals in 2015 with those in 2011, we can say that a significant growth of total tourist arrivals has been registered (90.87%), of which the highest share is taken by foreign tourists.

Table 11: **Tourist overnights in December 2011 – 2015 in the city of Zagreb**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Foreign	41,814	46,786	55,627	69,999	78,880
Domestic	27,899	25,977	27,915	32,203	49,282
Total	69,713	72,763	83,542	102,202	128,162

Source: Tourist Board of the city of Zagreb, <http://www.infozagreb.hr/>

In terms of achieved overnights, there was also a significant growth (83.84%), mostly achieved by foreign tourists. Considering the high growth of tourist turnover which was achieved in the period of Advent in Zagreb, it is obvious that its entire organization process as well as the marketing efforts which were conducted by the Tourist Board of Zagreb resulted in significant success. This is also illustrated by the fact that Advent in Zagreb was declared as the highest rated event on the European level among twenty cities (European Best Destinations, 2016), which indicates its significant contribution in achieving a higher level of recognizability and competitiveness of not just (event) tourist offer of Zagreb, but Croatia as well.

3. PROPOSITION OF FUTURE STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPMENT OF CROATIAN EVENT TOURISM

In order to achieve further development of event tourism in Croatia, it is necessary to determine current state of its offer, and based on that, propose suitable strategic developmental guidelines. Following, the authors will present SWOT matrix of Croatian event tourism.

Table 12: **SWOT matrix of Croatian event tourist offer**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserved resource base (natural, cultural-historical, etc.) • Events based on long cultural-historical tradition (Rapska Fjera, Rijeka Carnival, Advent in Zagreb, etc.) • High level of authenticity of the events • Significant level of involvement of the local community • Easily accessible destinations • Differentiation of the offer on the tourist market • Profit achieved through organization of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient participation of event tourism in the total tourist offer of Croatia • Uneven level of development of event tourist offer among Croatian destinations • Insufficient involvement of destination management in the creation of individual events on Croatian level • Insufficient level of knowledge of domestic population and event organizers about tourist events • Lack of clear and measurable indicators for designing the offer of events • Lack of clear marketing strategies • Lack of monitoring of economic benefits achieved through organization of events
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financing projects of improvement of existing and introduction of new tourist events through Cohesion Funds • Raising awareness among the citizens and businesses about the benefits of further development of event tourism • Higher level of employment • Economic benefits for all the stakeholders in the destination • Increasing the level of quality of a total tourist product of the Republic of Croatia • More available unique products and services oriented towards tourists/customers • Offering value and experience for money • Creation of special teams for tourist events in destination management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intolerance of the local community towards tourists • Pollution caused by tourism • Violation of authenticity of the event by tourist commercialization • Failure to adhere to the value for money and experience for money principle • Low level of quality of (event) tourist offer • Possibility of non-achieving financial benefits through organization of events

Source: Authors' interpretation according to Drpic, Milojica and Petrovska, 2014, 262.

Previous table presents all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Croatian event tourist offer. It is visible that event tourism represents an important carrier of tourist offer development, and its further development needs to be socially responsible and carefully and strategically planned. Drpic, Milošević and Petrovska (2014) point out significant contribution of events to the diversification of the tourist offer of a destination on the tourist market. In order to achieve an even development of event tourism on the state level, the authors propose the following developmental guidelines (Drpic, Milošević and Petrovska, 2014, 265):

- Future development of event tourist offer needs to be achieved while upholding sustainable development principles in order to preserve rich natural and cultural-historical resource base which guarantees a formation of a unique and recognizable (event) tourist offer;
- Necessity of monitoring the changes of the contemporary tourist trends and quick adaptation to them, as well as implementation of the successful practices on national and international level in order to achieve an even level of event tourism development;
- Implementation of advanced knowledge, skills and innovations as basic competitive advantages in the 21st century;
- Stronger inclusion of event tourism in the State Strategy of development of Croatian tourism, as well as conducting marketing activities which will enable higher level of recognizability and competitiveness on the tourist market.

4. CONCLUSION

Events represent an important factor of development of a contemporary tourist offer, with a particular accent on creating a recognizable image of a destination, branding the tourist offer, and gaining economic benefit. The aim of this paper was to evaluate the current state of the event tourist offer in Croatia and to propose necessary strategic developmental guidelines which will enable further development of Croatian event tourism and its bringing to a higher level. Results in the paper indicate that, despite some positive movements in development of event offer (i.e. this year's excellent success and placing of Advent in Zagreb on the tourist market, good visits as well as recognizability of Rijeka Carnival and Rapska Fjera on the tourist market, etc.), the level of development of Croatian event tourism is not satisfactory.

In order to achieve competitiveness on the tourist market, it is necessary to undertake further market research in order to determine tourist's preferences and adapt current tourist offer while preserving uniqueness and tradition. Introduction of researches focused strictly on event tourism, which would be conducted throughout the year (considering that events are organized during the whole year), is recommended as is the case with the analysis of summer offer, yachting offer, etc., by the Institute of Tourism in Zagreb. Also, it is necessary to actively monitor financial benefits achieved by organizing events, in order to determine has the destination achieved profit. Further successful development of event tourism will result in socio-economic advantages, reduction of seasonality, enabling for tourists to achieve not just value but also

experience for money. All this will result in reaching the leading competitive position on the tourist market.

This paper is the first in Croatia which conducts a joint analysis of Rapska Fjera, Rijeka Carnival and Advent in Zagreb in function of achieving competitiveness on the international tourist market. In terms of limitations, the paper is based on theoretical considerations, presentation of selected parts of an empirical research TOMAS Summer which are related with the event tourism of Croatia, and statistical data provided by the Tourist Boards. Bearing this in mind, the author's opinion is that it is necessary to not only introduce new research projects which would be strictly focused on development of event tourism in Croatia, but it is also necessary to undertake its own research in the future in order to determine the level of satisfaction of tourists while participating in a certain event and stay in a destination during that particular event, as well as monitoring tourist consumption achieved during these events.

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