

THE ROLE OF THE TOURIST BOARDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVENT TOURISM OF ZADAR COUNTY

Aleksandra Krajnović
Andrea Buškulić
Jurica Bosna

Abstract

World and domestic tourism market has become increasingly competitive. Consequently, it is necessary to find ways that will help in redefining tourism of Zadar County as a tourist destination. One of the ways of redefining tourism is uplifting cultural tourism as one of the fastest growing forms of tourism, which can have a far greater role in the future development of tourism. Using cultural potential of small towns for their economic development creates the competitive advantage of these small towns, and overall tourist destination.

It has been conducted a survey by the method of interviewing the experts – authors interviewed directors of the tourist boards in Zadar County as the most representative persons for this topic due to the fact that they have responsibility and ability to improve current tourist situation in Zadar County.

One of the ways for attracting tourists is a creation of unique tourist offer, which should be based on the events as an integral part of cultural tourism. In the case of Zadar County is necessary to create a tourist offer which will be original and of high quality, that will also promote the distinctive attractions of Zadar County and authentic events based on the culture of the observed destination.

The greatest contribution of this paper is that it shows and emphasizes the importance and potential of cultural events on the example of Zadar County. Authors also propose specific actions and guidelines to improve cultural events in Zadar County and give potential model that other counties can follow.

Keywords: event tourism, tourism offer, destination recognition, Zadar County, tourist board

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past natural beauties and climate are not the only precondition for tourist attraction and development of tourist destination. World tourism market is fast growing and increasingly competitive due to the different tourism destinations which try to attract their market segment on a new and innovative way. Because of these reasons, other tourism destinations represent significant competition for Croatian tourism destinations which should expand and improve its tourist offer if they want to survive and be competitive on the global tourism market.

Cultural heritage and tourism are interconnected. As the development of tourism contributes to economic development, it is firstly necessary to perform an adequate valorisation of cultural heritage, in order to create a suitable tourism product (Stamenković and Jakšić, 2013). Tourists participate in cultural activities more than

ever before, while cultural tourism becomes the most desirable possibility for development of regions and countries in general (Vrtiprah, 2006; Zedkova and Kajzar, 2013; Patrascu 2013).

In the Republic of Croatia exist real, but insufficient explored opportunities for implementation and development of cultural heritage in function of tourism development (Gredičak, 2011). Cultural tourism is one of the most significant selective forms of tourism, which in itself contains a number of sub-forms. Each of the sub-form has its historical continuity of development, stagnation and re-awakening (Stipanović et al., 2015). Moreover, due to different changes in tourist behaviour, tourists are becoming more interested in specific forms of tourism. Specific forms of tourism are characterised by emphasized individuality in satisfying tourists' needs and desires. One of these specific forms of tourism is event tourism (Težak et al., 2011).

According to Jovanović and Delić (2010), economic aspects of events are of high importance because they generate revenue for the whole economy. Even more, it has been estimated how money invested in tourism by events generates tenfold return what is a significant data. Also, there is a nonfinancial benefit which has been reflected in the positive tourist impressions. Another important fact is that each tourist spreads his impressions with ten people on average. Thanks to events millions of people each year learn more about the destinations and their tourist offer what makes the opportunity to create new, large base of potential tourists if the impressions of visitors are positive. According to the Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020, heritage tourism is a particularly relevant product of cultural tourism in Croatia, due to the rich cultural and historical heritage that has become essential for Croatian tourism product.

Paper tries to find out the importance of the events in tourism while events in Zadar County have been especially analysed with the emphasize on the cultural events. Paper will answer following questions: Are events in Zadar County well organized during the whole year? Is there awareness of the importance of scheduling tourist events in Zadar County? What obstacles are present in the process of organizing tourist events in Zadar County? Are they focused on tradition, culture or commercial events with entertaining content? and other by conducting the method of interview with directors of the tourist boards in Zadar County.

1. EVENT TOURISM

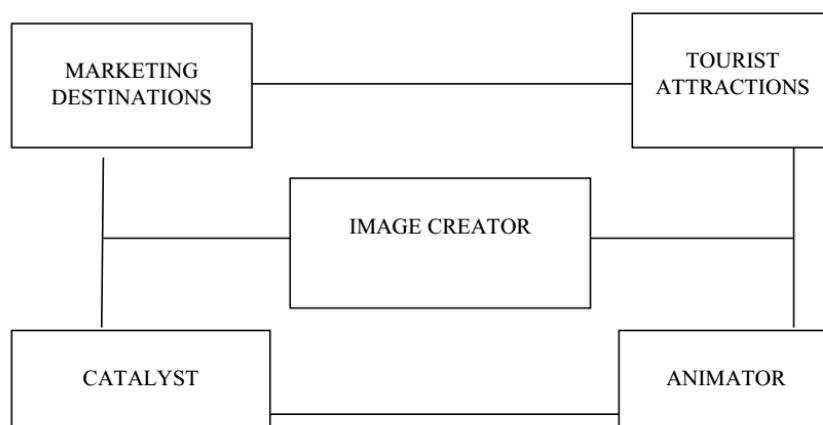
During the last decade of the 20th century, there has been an evidence of intensive growth of the economic role and importance of events within developed countries and transition economies. The economic role and importance of events might be achieved only if the planning, staging and taking place of the events in tourism are well managed (Pivac et al., 2011). Blešić et al. (2014) state how in current economic climate, events play an important role for cities and whole regions. Events are considered to contribute significantly to cultural and economic development and as such have major impact on the development of cultural tourism to the host communities.

The concept of the event can be defined from different perspectives, but most of the authors offer similar definitions. Bowdin et al. (2011) define events like organized occasions such as meetings, conventions, exhibitions, special events, gala dinners. Events often consist of several different, but related functions. Getz (2005) emphasize how the main feature of all events is that they are temporary and that any such event stems from the unique cohesion of management, organization, program and people. Johansson (2007) defines events and states that they are large or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to increase awareness, response and profitability tourist destinations in the short or the long term. Success of these events has been based on uniqueness, status, and time of significance in creating interest and attracting attention. It refers to events which carry quality, attractiveness, publicity and which contribute to competitive advantages of tourist destination. Event and destination should be connected with each other so that rethinking of destination reflects reminder of the event.

Nobile (2005) states how more often cities and other tourist destinations organize and manage events of various kinds, which are often used as a means of positioning the city and destination. Festivals and special events have been increasingly demanded by visitors due to their unique offer. Generally, event offer an opportunity to participate in the collective experience different from everyday life which also helps in preserving and developing local culture and history, renewing urban areas and the region, generating economic benefits, stimulate local tourism and extending the tourist season (Huang et al., 2010).

Moreover, events are an important motivating factor in tourism and very important issue in the development strategies of tourist destinations by generating comparative advantage of tourist destination (Ispas i Hertanu, 2011). The term event tourism has been used to illustrate the development of destinations and marketing strategies to identify all potential economic benefits of the events while Getz (2005) emphasizes five basic tourist and economic roles of the events (Figure 1).

Figure 1: **Tourist and economic role of the events**



Source: Getz (2005)

Events can be considered as attractions which motivate local people and tourists to travel, and thus can increase tourist consumption and prolong staying period in tourist destination. Also, events can contribute in retaining local residents and their money that can be spent in home country, rather than traveling elsewhere. They can also be animators through structured programs of special events at existing facilities in order to further exploit parks, museums and tourist resorts. This leads to the advantage of attracting visitors who might not visit the destination if there are no events, moreover to encourage visitors to re-visit that destination (Getz, 2005).

Large events can act as creators of the image and have a role in creating the overall image of the destination due to media attention and publicity which they generate. Moreover, events can be important factors in creating marketing of destination by increasing the image of the community and attracting tourists. This can lead to improved quality of life, attraction of new residents, industry and investors but can also improve infrastructure and facilities of destination (Johanson, 2007). There are number of ways in which the cultural event constitutes a boost for the development of cultural tourism in terms of realising experience economy, enhancing destination image, facilitating urban regeneration, fertilizing cultural provision and establishing partnerships (Liu, 2015).

One of the major forms of cultural tourism development undertaken throughout Europe has been the staging of a growing number of cultural events. The event of European Capitals of Culture¹ (ECOC) is probably the best example of the new trends of cultural tourism in Europe (Liu, 2014).

2. EVENTS AS KEY TOURIST DESTINATION BRAND FACTORS

Tourist destination branding is a combination of philosophy and its implementation. It means giving special attention to what destination wants to wake up in the minds of visitors and tourists, thereby choosing the appropriate features and using appropriate communication techniques for more efficiently and convincingly reaching out to the targeted market (Tan, 2008).

Destination brand represents the sum of visitor perceptions, thoughts and feelings about the destination. Destination branding is organizing principle which involves management of messages and experiences related to that place in order to ensure that the messages and experiences are different, powerful, compelling, memorable, and useful as much as possible. Successfully branded destinations will remain in the minds, memories and hearts of visitors, clearly differentiating from others and which deliver promised value and simplify consumer choice (Baker, 2007).

¹ European Capitals of Culture are one of the most recognised EU projects which Highlights the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe. Source: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm

Jayaswal (2008) pointed out how events can be the most powerful way for attracting tourists in destination because popular events generate more effective brand and have more powerful impact on the perception of tourist destination. The importance of the events in branding process also emphasized Jago (2003) which thinks that if events are effectively and appropriately incorporated in the brand strategy of destination, then there must be a clear vision how the events will be incorporated into an integrated marketing campaign destination.

That implies the need to evaluate the contribution of the event, not only direct financial contributions, but also from consistency with the brand destination values. That consistency as evaluation criteria refers to - does interrelation between elements of marketing mix enhance the value of the destination brand (Marzano and Scott, 2006).

Trošt et al. (2012) state how events became especially significant component in destination branding process. Esu and Mbaze-Arrey (2009) also state when event is appropriately branded it can potentially contribute to the development of destinations in which it operates as an attraction that will make destination unique and popular among potential visitors.

Destination managers in the most of the cases do not have clearly stated objectives which they want to achieve by the event in a manner of destination branding process. If events want to be effectively and properly incorporated in brand destination strategy, it is important to have clear vision of the ways by which the events should be the part of integrated marketing destination campaign (Johanson, 2007). Ezeuduji (2015) states how cultural events have a potential to secure a brand identity of the tourist destination in the global tourism marketplace, while preserving the unique cultural and natural heritage.

3. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The research has been conducted by the method of interviewing the experts - directors of the tourist boards in Zadar County with the aim of finding out current position of events in Zadar County and possibilities of their development. There are overall 26 tourist boards in Zadar County of which 14 presidents of the tourist boards agreed to be interviewed. Therefore, authors conducted interviews with the presidents of the Bibinje, Dugi otok, Kali, Nin, Novigrad, Pag, Pašman, Privlaka, Ražanac, Sukošan, Sv Filip i Jakov, Ugljan, Vir and Zadar tourist boards.

Respondents gave following answers on the question about the importance of the events as a part of the tourist offer according to their opinion (Table 1).

Table 1: Importance of the events as a part of the tourist offer

Tourist board	Does not matter	Few important	Mainly important	Important	Very important	Essential
Vir			x			
Pag				x		
Ražanac				x		
Ugljan				x		
Dugi otok					x	
Nin					x	
Novigrad					x	
Privlaka					x	
Sukošan					x	
Bibinje						x
Kali						x
Pašman						x
Zadar						x
Sv. Filip i Jakov						x

Source: Made by authors.

Further, respondents have been asked about events that they organize – about their focus on tradition, history, local culture or commercial events which have entertaining content. Responds have been given in table 2.

Table 2: Focus of the events

Tourist board	Responds
Bibinje	Focused on tradition, history and local culture.
Dugi otok	Tradition, history and local culture.
Kali	Generally, we have few events but each year we increase their number – all types of events have been equally represented.
Nin	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history and local culture.
Novigrad	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history and local culture.
Pag	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history, local culture and commercial events.
Zadar	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history, local culture and commercial events.
Pašman	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history and local culture.
Privlaka	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition and commercial events.
Ražanac	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history, local culture and commercial events.

Tourist board	Responds
Sukošan	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history, local culture and commercial events.
Sv Filip i Jakov	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history and local culture.
Ugljan	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history, local culture and commercial events.
Vir	Events that have been organized in our community are focused on tradition, history and local culture.

Source: Made by authors

From the response we can conclude how all tourist boards recognize culture as an important resource for the events as part of the tourist offer. On question “When (in which period of the year) do you organize events in tourism” respondents gave following answers (table 3).

Table 3: **Period of organizing the events**

Tourist board	Period
Bibinje	During the season
Dugi otok	During the season
Kali	During the season
Nin	During the season
Novigrad	During the summer months, very rare throughout the year
Pag	During the season
Pašman	During the season
Privlaka	During the season
Ražanac	During the season
Sukošan	During the whole year but mainly in summer period from Easter to the half of September)
Sv Filip i Jakov	During the season
Ugljan	During the season
Zadar	During the season
Vir	During the season

Source: Made by authors

Most of the tourist boards organize events during the season while just two tourist boards organize events during the whole year. Limiting factors that represent obstacles for using full potential of events in each tourist board have been given in table 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Respondents evaluated each limiting factors from 1 to 10, while grade 1 means that factor is not limiting while grade 10 means essential limiting factor for better utilization of the full potential of events.

Table 4: **Lack of support and involvement of the local citizens**

Tourist board	Intensity
Bibinje	9
Dugi otok	5
Kali	6
Nin	2
Novigrad	9
Pag	2
Pašman	9
Privlaka	8
Ražanac	7
Sukošan	3
Sv Filip i Jakov	7
Ugljan	5
Vir	6
Zadar	5

Source: Made by authors

Six tourist boards (Bibinje, Novigrad, Pašman, Privlaka, Ražanac i Sv Filip i Jakov) gave very high grade on previous question which means that they have support and involvement of local citizens in managing the events. On the other hand, tourist boards of Nin, Sukošan and Pag do not have support and involvement of the local citizens in conducting the events. Furtherly, in table 5 have been given responses about lack of skilled persons for managing the events.

Table 5: **The lack of skilled persons for managing the events**

Tourist board	Intensity
Bibinje	9
Dugi otok	2
Kali	8
Nin	1
Novigrad	9
Pag	3
Pašman	6
Privlaka	3
Ražanac	3
Sukošan	6
Sv Filip i Jakov	6
Ugljan	8
Vir	5
Zadar	8

Source: Made by authors

Five tourist boards (Bibinje, Kali, Novigrad, Ugljan i Zadar) consider how there is no professional staff which will effectively manage their events. Tourist boards of Nin, Dugi Otok, Pag, Privlaka i Ražanac do not have a problem with the skilled persons for managing the events. Table 6 gives responses about insufficient financial resources for the preparation of events.

Table 6: **The issue of insufficient financial resources for the preparation of events**

Tourist board	Intensity
Bibinje	10
Dugi otok	8
Kali	10
Nin	10
Novigrad	10
Pag	9
Pašman	6
Privlaka	6
Ražanac	9
Sukošan	7
Sv Filip i Jakov	10
Ugljan	10
Vir	8
Zadar	2

Source: Made by authors

The average grade of the question about financial resources for the preparation of events is 8,2 which indicates a major constraint that the funding has for the organization of the events. Table 7 gives grades about lack of sponsors in financing the events.

Table 7: **Lack of sponsor interest**

Tourist board	Intensity
Bibinje	8
Dugi otok	9
Kali	8
Nin	8
Novigrad	6
Pag	7
Pašman	8
Privlaka	5
Ražanac	7
Sukošan	7
Sv Filip i Jakov	7
Ugljan	10
Vir	8
Zadar	9

Source: Made by authors

Average grade on question about lack of sponsor interest is 7,64 which means very limiting factor. Table 8 deals with the issue of insufficient event compliance at the county level.

Table 8: **Insufficient event time compliance at the county level**

Tourist board	Intensity
Bibinje	6
Dugi otok	1
Kali	5
Nin	10
Novigrad	10
Pag	1
Pašman	6
Privlaka	8
Ražanac	4
Sukošan	7
Sv Filip i Jakov	6
Ugljan	4
Vir	2
Zadar	3

Source: Made by authors

Responses of the tourist boards on the question about time event compliance are various. Two tourist boards (Nin and Novigrad) this factor evaluate as a crucial while tourist boards of Dugi otok, Pag and Vir this factor do not consider as limiting factor in exploiting the potentials of the events.

To the question "do you think that events play an important role in creating brand of your tourist destination?" Interviewed directors of tourist communities have responded as follows:

Bibinje – Yes, they have a crucial role in creating brand of destination. For many years we have several events that enrich our tourist season and by which our place became greatly recognized. Guests have inquiries about exact date of events because they want to come on holiday during that period. Moreover, they recommend our destination to their acquaintances. By the events we try to preserve the cultural, historical and culinary heritage of our place, so events are very important in creation of recognizable destination brand.
Dugi otok – Yes, because we need to enrich our tourist offer.
Kali – Yes, events play an important role in creating a destination brand because they provide guests new experience of the facts by which our place is famous. There should be much more events but current financial and human obstacles does not allow us to increase them. Many guests are planning to visit our place during the most popular event while they recommend it to others.
Nin- Yes. Events contribute in destination branding process. In our case, events have been based on culture and gastronomy.

Novigrad – Yes. Our goal is to generate brand of Novigrad as unavoidable destination on the Adriatic in the category of cultural tourism. After three years of event performance, Novigrad begins to be recognized worldwide due to the events.
Pag – Yes, traditional events like International festival of lace, Pag Summer Festival, Pag Cultural Summer promote Pag as a cultural destination. Plan is to develop other cultural events.
Pašman – Yes, according to the events our place has become greatly recognized. Guests have inquiries about exact date of events because they want to come on holiday during that period. Moreover, they recommend our destination to their acquaintances. By the events we try to preserve the cultural, historical and culinary heritage of our place, so events are very important in creation of recognizable destination brand.
Ražanac – Yes.
Sukošan - Yes. From experience we can say that tourists are increasingly planning their attendance during the period of events, especially referring to pre and post season.
Sv Filip i Jakov – Yes. Events have a great contribution in destination branding process. Guests have inquiries about exact date of events because they want to come on holiday during that period. Moreover, they recommend our destination to their acquaintances. By the events we try to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of our place. Definitely, events are very important in process of creating recognizable destination brand.
Ugljan – Yes, because many guests plan their vacation during the period of events what is a significant indicator of the importance of events.
Vir – Yes.
Zadar – No, but they should have significant role.

Almost all tourist boards which have been involved in the research consider how events have important role in creating the brand of tourist destination. But, tourist board of Zadar is the only tourist board which does not think so.

4. DISCUSSION

Events are important part of the tourist offer according to the tourist boards which means that awareness of the importance of events in tourism has been present. That fact promises bright future of the observed destinations if they will be focused on managing the events. Events enrich tourist offer and satisfy needs of modern visitors and tourists. Also, all tourist boards recognize culture as an important resource and basis for the events. That is also another promising fact because cultural events attract tourists and build competitiveness of the destination.

Almost all tourist boards organize events just during the summer period. That is an indicator of seasonality which is the most substantial issue in tourism of Zadar County. In a manner to overcome seasonality, it is important to organize events during the whole year. Also, involvement of local citizens in organizing and managing the events is crucial factor for the success of tourist destination which means that they need to be more involved due to the results of the research.

Most of the tourist boards consider lack of skilled personnel as another limiting factor for generating full potentials of the events. They do not have persons which are exclusively specialized for managing the events while their existing employees do not have enough required skills in managing the events.

The limited budget of local and regional governments for development of cultural tourism directly limit the potential of events as valuable cultural-tourism product for the purpose of enriching the tourist offer, creating a competitive advantage of destination and effective destination brand. Therefore, it is important to find another sources of financing simultaneously knowing that it is very difficult to find sponsors due to their different goals.

Tourist boards have different opinions about event time compliance at the county level but they should cooperate in a manner to create unique tourist offer in a manner to maximize the potential of the Zadar County as a destination. Zadar tourist board do not realize the importance that could certain events have in process of creating unique brand of City of Zadar and Zadar County in general. Cobranding of destinations and events should be a powerful tool for attracting people in destinations and strengthening the brand of destinations.

5. CONCLUSION

Almost all tourist boards which participated in the research recognize the enormous potential of the events and their great significance in tourism. In spite of that fact, events are not fully utilized and there is not enough focus and dedication for encouraging them.

Moreover, events in Zadar County are mainly organized just during the season what means that efforts in overcoming seasonality are inadequate. It is necessary to organize the events throughout the year – events are one of the most important factors for attracting tourist. So, they should be innovative and well organized simultaneously providing an unforgettable experience. Also, if events are well-promoted they tend to be accompanied by a large number of visitors.

According to the research, there are many causes which affect inadequate tourist valorisation of events in Zadar County such as insufficient commitment to this form of tourism, lack of staff (education and experience) which should organize and manage the events in a manner to create added value, insufficient financial resources, lack of sponsors and ultimately insufficient cooperation of the local population.

Organization of the events during the whole year should certainly increase the number of tourist arrivals and be the beginning for overcoming the seasonality. Before that, it is important to educate employees of the tourist boards in Zadar County about organization of the events what is one of the limiting factor.

Due to the lack of financial support for organization of events, tourist boards should focus on European funds and apply for specific projects which will include various kinds of events. Also, another solution for the tourist boards of the Zadar County is alignment with the objectives of the sponsors because their primary interest is access to their target group. In that case, it is possible to develop joint partnership among tourist boards and sponsors.

In order to avoid overlaps and inconsistencies in a manner to allow visitors to attend all cultural events and get to know all particularities of the Zadar County by the events, at the county level should be made unique calendar / schedule of the events.

From the results of the research it is important to emphasize efforts of the Nin tourist board which more than other else pays attention to the events and understands the concerned issue. Generally, Zadar County do not fully exploit the potential of tourism events that could create better recognition of Zadar County, complement its tourist offer and extend the tourist season.

With regard of the significant importance of the events, authors are of opinion that events in Zadar County should be managed on the county level – tourist board of Zadar County should be in charge for efficient schedule and supervision of events. Also, tourist board of Zadar County should provide support in organization and implementation of events, because on that way entire Zadar County could be promoted and generated synergistic effect. It would also contribute to the branding of the tourist region of Zadar County.

Authors have not conducted the survey with director of the Zadar County tourist board, tourists and the local population what is a limitation of this paper.

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Aleksandra Krajnović, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Zadar
Department of Economics
Splitska 1, 23 000 Zadar, Croatia
Phone: +385 23 400 406
E-mail: akrajnov@unizd.hr

Andrea Buškulić, MA
Bnet, Head of the Zadar branch
E-mail: abuskulic@bnet.hr

Jurica Bosna, MA, Assistant
University of Zadar
Department of Economics
Splitska 1, 23 000 Zadar
Phone: +385 23 400 410
E-mail: jbosna@unizd.hr