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The Role of Beaches in the Tourism Offering: The Case Study of the Municipality of Lovran

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ABSTRACT

To position the tourism offering of the Municipality of Lovran, it must be adjusted to the modern needs of tourists. In this, a key role belongs to designing, implementing and sustaining an experience system as part of the destination's integrated tourism product. Lovran as a tourist destination can become distinctive only to the extent to which it can provide services and facilities capable of satisfying the travel needs and motivations of tourists. When designing an experience system, the destination is generally in the focus of interest. This paper, however, takes a closer look at the thematization of beaches that are a part of Lovran's tourism offering. Previous tourism development in Lovran has first and foremost been centred on the summer months when the sun, sea and beaches are the primary motivation for tourist arrivals.

Lovran as a tourist destination, together with its beaches, provides opportunities that have yet to be fully valorised with regard to implementing the experience system in beaches. In this respect, the paper aims to highlight the need for beach thematization. Beach thematization is carried out in accordance with the vision of the destination to ensure the optimal distribution of bathers and to satisfy their preferences. A new classification of beaches is made according to the Bathing Area Registration and Evaluation (BARE) system, which is adjusted to the needs of the market. The BARE system categorises beaches based on their accessibility and coastal scenery. The purpose of the paper is to analyse beaches in Lovran and, in accordance with a beach's potential, to propose a theme (eco beach, romantic beach, beach for families with children, etc.) for each one, based on the Regional Program for the Adaptation and Management of Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. The authors conclude that beaches have a primary importance for most tourists as well as residents, making it essential to respect their physical, social and ecological carrying capacities.

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1 Introduction

Although Croatia has an exceptionally long and rich coast, it has yet to organise the efficient management of such a vital natural resource. A number of ministries are engaged in resolving individual issues concerning the coastal zone: the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction; Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Culture/State Institute for Nature Protection; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development; and Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship. The overlapping of the competencies, rights and obligations of these ministries has resulted in poor communication among ministries and a lack of beneficial and fruitful cooperation. Especially important is the role of the

Department of Sea and Soil Protection within the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction. To prevent the occurrence of adverse consequences with regard to space, it is essential the coastal zone is managed as a target managed resource through the coordinated efforts of competent government bodies and local communities.

The wealth of the coastal zone is evident foremost in its beaches that have become a major travel motivation for tourists to Croatia in the past 50 years. Swimming and bathing – the favourite activity of tourists – centres on the seaside and beaches where summer leisure tourism is developed. While many authors have addressed the topic of beaches as a tourism resource, very few have focused on beach management in the Municipality of Lovran. Hence, this paper presents a scientific critical analysis

of beaches on the example of a single municipality but could also be applied to any coastal destination. A spatial analysis of beaches was conducted using the Bathing Area Registration and Evaluation (BARE) system, taking into consideration different beach-area assessment parameters and factors. Based on the obtained results of research, the authors have proposed a theme for each beach. Beach thematization presents a compelling platform for rethinking the level of organization of tourism organization systems from the perspective of local self-government structures. The authors analyse the tourism indicators of the Municipality of Lovran and take a close look at the current state to provide a foundation upon which to design, expand and improve the existing tourism offering and organization and, in turn, to drive economic growth. Beaches are a tourism resource of every coastal destination. Different beaches give a destination its authenticity and the specific characteristics of each beach make a destination distinctive and competitive relative to other destinations. In and of itself, a beach as a resource is not enough to ensure successful development; beaches need to be managed and marketed, and their development, strategically planned. Modern tourists are looking for a rich, imaginative and meaningful offering. Hence, the primary aim of the paper is to call attention to the lack of strategic planning with regard to this valuable resource.

2 Literature Overview

The development of seaside bathing resorts in the Croatian Littoral, as well as in Lovran, followed in the wake of debates in the professional and academic literature regarding the favourable effects of the sea and bathing on the human body. According to the latest Tomas survey conducted by the Institute for Tourism in 2017, passive holidays and relaxation at the seaside was the primary travel motivation for 55% of tourists, followed by new experiences (31%), gastronomy (29%), visiting natural attractions (26%), fun (24%), engaging in sport and recreational activities (20%), and many others [1]. Regarding length of stay, most guests (68%) spent up to ten overnights on their trip. The most frequent stays (39%) are those lasting four to seven overnights, followed by those lasting eight to ten overnights (27%). The favourite activity of tourists during their stay in Croatia is swimming/bathing (78.3%), followed by visits to restaurants (46.9%), going to pastry shops and coffee shops (45.5%), attending local festivities (30.1%), sightseeing (25.7%), and taking excursions to national parks/protected nature areas (21.1%). Initially travelling to these resorts for reasons of health, foreigners began to arrive because they wanted to enjoy the comforts of a warm Mediterranean climate. Because visitors tended to stay in coastal towns when continental regions were in the grip of the cold season, the tourism year lasted from October of one year to May of the next. Considering that it was warm everywhere during the summertime, most of the tourist arrivals took place in winter [2, 29-42]. By the end of the nineteenth

century the towns of Opatija, Lovran, Mali Lošinj and Veli Lošinj, Sušak, Bakar, Kraljevica, Crikvenica, Selce and Novi Vinodolski were well-known as winter health resorts and seaside resorts. Both domestic and foreign authors published articles in the academic literature regarding the beneficial effects of sea air and bathing in the sea. Lukežić points out that as early as 1858 Anton Feliks Jačić of Lovran highlighted the health-related and physical benefits of the sea in his paper *Cenni popolari su i bagni di mare* [3]. He stated that cooling down in the sea during the heat of summer contributes to improving the general condition of the body, and prolonged stay in the sea facilitates the "assimilation" of salt and other elements, thus spurring a number of processes beneficial to the human body. Swimming was considered as being the most beneficial type of exercise, while "using" the sea in its natural state and in a healthy environment with clean air and a clear sky was seen to have a soothing effect on ailing tissue, even in small coastal towns such as Lovran. The beach is a primary resource of all seaside destinations. These destinations focus all their activities on providing top-quality and superior services within the framework of beaches. A beach is a natural as well as economic asset of a tourist destination. In terms of culture, a beach is a liminal space or marginal zone in which different cultures and lifestyles touch and interact [4]. They are places on which the tourism offering is grounded, together with tourists' perceptions of relaxation and escape from everyday life. On the other hand, beaches are a part of the culture of living and events that are vital to the local communities residing in their vicinity [5, 199]. Beaches "lure" tourists and encourage greater spending in seaside destinations. According to Klein and Osleeb [6, 1150], beach quality has a large effect on the value of the coastal zone for residents and visitors alike. In economic terms, adverse changes to beaches can result in the decline of regional development, tourism, jobs, tax revenue, etc. In addition, changes that focus exclusively on tourists (recharging, levelling or cementing of beaches, provision of amenities on beaches, etc.) are often poorly received by residents, vital stakeholders of a destination's tourism development. Growing awareness of the dynamic changes occurring in beach areas has given rise to the concept of integrated beach zone management, that is, sustainable beach management. Kim and Cho [7, 104] argue that to systematically manage beaches, comprehensive provisions need to be prepared that cover various stakeholders and define the environment of bathing beaches. Stakeholders of bathing beaches can include local residents, merchants, fishing village cooperative and general users. According to Alves et al. [8, 526], to achieve a high quality environmental status, beach users' needs and implemented leisure services must be harmonious. Gračan et al., dealing with integrated management, underscore the role of beaches as an integral part of the integrated tourism product of a destination [9, 76]. This makes it all the more important, according to Kovačić and Komać [10, 254], for the public administration to recognize the importance of beach management and to adopt beach resource

management measures and recommendations to ensure the conservation of biological diversity and beaches as a social, recreational and economic resource. A basic guideline of good beach management at the local level suggests participation of citizens in decisions concerning the use of public goods, and partnerships between local authorities, civil society organizations and the private sector [11].

In his tourism classification of the geological features of space, Kušen divides natural beaches into the following categories: sandy beaches, pebble beaches, stone slab beaches and beaches covered in grass. He goes on to list the motivations and activities related to beaches: sunbathing, relaxation, pre-bathing, playing, enjoying the landscape, and picnicking, and the activities related to a clean, warm sea with a temperature higher than 20°C: bathing, swimming, diving, water skiing, windsurfing and paragliding [12]. In this paper, the author seeks to encourage consideration of the economic role of beaches, as beaches are the main motivation for tourist arrivals. In Spain, where the tourism concept is still based on the “sea, sun and sand” model, beaches are among the country’s most important resources. Namely, beach tourism in Spain accounts for about 74% of inbound tourism [13]. The same conclusion can also be applied to Croatia. The huge importance that people attribute to beaches is reflected in the accelerated urbanisation of those areas, aimed at encouraging tourist arrivals and providing opportunities for new jobs. The following sections provide an overview of the tourism offering of Lovran and put forward suggestions for improving beach tourism on the example of the Municipality of Lovran.

3 Tourism Offering – A Case Study of the Municipality Of Lovran

Lovran is a town with a long, rich past and a long-standing tradition in tourism. Of the settlements that grew on the eastern steep slopes of Mt Učka, Lovran is one of the oldest on the Liburnian coast. The town has preserved its historical core which is based on the medieval urban concept. It was once surrounded by defensive walls with bastions, on which foundations houses were later built. Over the centuries, the area around the old historical core was also built up. Today Lovran is one of the most important tourist destinations of the Opatija Riviera. The well-known seaside promenade that connects Lovran with

other towns of the Opatija Riviera begins here. In 1911 the promenade connected Lovran with Opatija and Volosko. Its mild climate, lush Mediterranean vegetation and favourable geographical position are factors that foster intense tourism development, in particular summer tourism focused on the sun, sea and beaches.

In the past one hundred years, Lovran has embraced tourism, initially as a winter resort and health resort for the upper circles of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and today as a holiday destination attracting tourists mainly in the summer months. Remaining from the inception of tourism is a number of beautiful Secession-style villas, built at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, along the coastal zone north and south of the old town core, some of which belong to the peak of world architectural heritage. In addition to the Austro-Hungarian period, the post-World War II era up to the beginning of the Homeland War is also important in the development of accommodation facilities and tourist stays. For example, according to a report by the Tourism Association, responsible for the categorisation of private accommodations, Lovran had 726 beds [14, 39]. With the construction of Hotel Excelsior in Lovran (which opened in June 1986, with 370 beds, of which 36 were in holiday flats), the town had a total 1,683 hotel beds (covering Lovran and Medveja). At that time this organisational unit belonged to the enterprise Hotelijerstvo Kvarner Express. The motor camp in Medveja had a capacity of 1,500 places [15]. In 1993 Lovran had 4,847 beds, of which 1,851 beds were in primary accommodation facilities (hotels, guesthouses, motels, hostels, holiday flat complexes, inns and other hospitality facilities) [16]. According to the most recent data of the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, in 2016 Lovran had a total of 4,795 beds, of which 836 were located in campsites and camping areas [17, 99]. Today Lovran provides accommodation services in numerous hotels, guesthouses and private accommodation. Tourists can relax on Lovran’s many terraces or enjoy sunbathing and swimming at one of the two better-known town beaches (Kvarner and Peharovo) or at small pebble beaches found in numerous coves.

The tourism indicators of the Municipality of Lovran have shown positive, upward trends in recent decades. The following table 1 illustrates the number of tourist arrivals and overnights in the period 2012 – 2016. Given the outstanding importance of tourism and tourist spending

Table 1 Total number of tourist arrivals and overnights in Lovran in the period 2012 – 2016

Year	Arrivals	Rate of change in %	Overnights	Share of foreign overnights in %
2012	64,342		257,196	91
2013	71,173	10.6	274,259	91
2014	79,446	11.6	293,214	90
2015	82,129	3.3	309,400	89
2016	91,711	11.6	339,057	89

Source: By the author, after *Tourism in Seaside Resorts and Municipalities in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb.

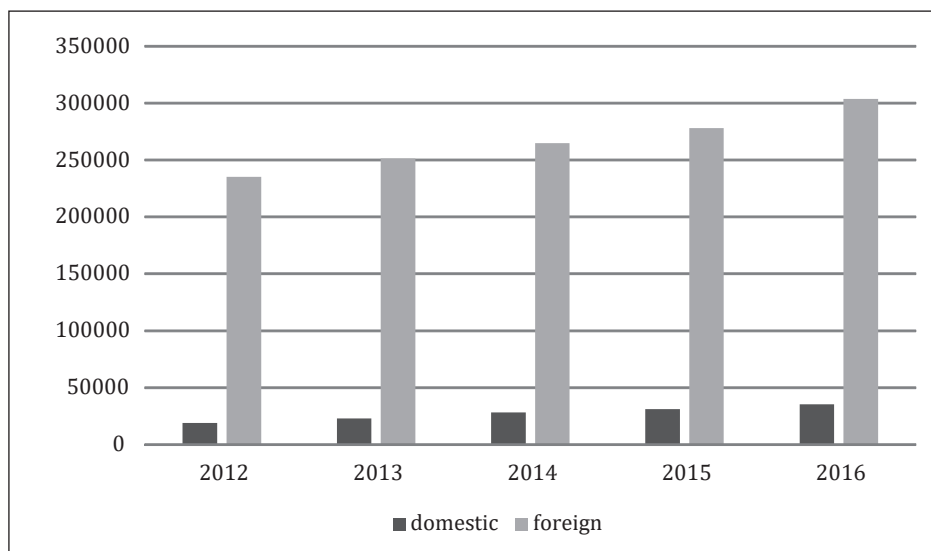


Figure 1 Number of overnights by domestic and foreign tourists

Source: By the author, after *Tourism in Seaside Resorts and Municipalities in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb.

Table 2 Tourist traffic in Lovran in 2015 and 2016

	Arrivals		Index 2015/2016	Overnights		Index 2015/2016
	2015	2016		2015	2016	
Lovran	82,129	91,711	111.6	309,400	339,057	109.5

Source: By the author, after *Tourism in Seaside Resorts and Municipalities in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb.

in the overall economy of Lovran, the tourism policy and its implementation are one of the fundamental tasks of businesspeople and economic-policy makers.

The basic tourism indicators of tourist arrivals and overnights demonstrate an upward trend in the growing number of tourist arrivals and overnights in Lovran, suggesting steady growth of overall tourist spending as well. Increases in the number of arrivals are especially evident in 2016 and 2014, years that mark the highest growth rates. An increase in the number of foreign tourists and foreign tourist spending relative to domestic tourist spending is also apparent, with the share of foreign overnights exceeding 90%. Foreign tourist arrivals and overnights show steady growth and a considerable increase in the share of foreign guests in overall tourist traffic. The analysed result is presented in Figure 1.

The results of analysis of tourist traffic in Lovran show that the number of arrivals grew by 11.6% in 2016, relative to the previous year. The number of overnights also grew by 9.5% in 2016, in comparison with the previous year (Table 2).

Now, in the twenty-first century, Lovran boasts a rich historical heritage, a century-long tourism tradition, preserved nature, and developed infrastructure, all of which can give renewed impetus to tourism while enabling sustainable development and compliance with all ecological standards. Ecological standards, the conservation of spatial attributes and co-existence with natural assets rep-

resent an important competitive advantage and Lovran indeed has the opportunity to transform these values into advantages on the discerning tourism market.

4 Beaches as the Basis of the Tourism Offering of Lovran

When thinking about spaces that provide the basis for a tourism offering capable of satisfying the demands of tourists, beaches must be taken into consideration. A beach management vision can be realised through clearly-defined objectives related to beaches. These refer to [18, 300]:

- Ensuring safe and pleasant bathing for visitors and residents
- Respecting the limitations of physical carrying capacity
- Providing a clean sea and clean environment
- Reducing pollution and waste production by tourism facilities (on and around the beach) to a minimum. According to Portz, Portantiolo Manzolli and Garzon [19, 1424], given that ecosystems are connected (beaches, mangroves, reefs), the development of a solid waste management program, including constant cleaning actions on all beaches, will be a determinative factor for the maintenance and conservation of all ecosystems.
- Respecting the limitations of ecological carrying capacity

- Ensuring that the proper recreational facilities/services, bathroom facilities and catering offering are present on all beaches
- Respecting the limitations of social carrying capacity.

To ensure the successful promotion of Croatian beaches on the tourism market, certain preliminary work must be performed. This in particular refers to conducting research to gain better insight into the demographic structure of tourists, their length of stay, favourite type of accommodation, satisfaction with value for money, and average spending. Research should also be carried out to study the users of beaches in Croatia (the number of beach users, their satisfaction with regard to the beach environment, safety conditions [7], [20], facilities/amenities and overcrowding; it would also be very helpful to learn whether beach users would be willing to pay for improvements to the environment and for recreational facilities/services on beaches). Following this, a plan for sustainable tourism development needs to be devised, which should be in full accordance with the current spatial plans (of destinations and counties). It is especially important to ensure that proposals are fully in line with the carrying capacities of the beach and destination. It would be preferable to avoid increasing tourist accommodation capacities (hotels, holiday flats and private accommodation, in particular) which should reflect the defined limitations of carrying capacity. A comprehensive beach management strategy should be developed that will define the type of management and instruments to be applied.

Beach management also involves producing a beach management plan that should be part of other coastal zone development plans at the local, regional and national levels. Proper beach management entails identifying the national coastal zone management policy and clearly defining it at the local and regional levels. The development of a beach management plan should focus on four key steps [18, 34-35]: the elaboration of a beach management strategy; the implementation of various techniques to gather data, assess the environment and related issues, and evaluate the quality of the beach environment (using the BARE system, for example); the recommendation of a bathing area management model; and the formulation of guidelines and suggestions for beach management [21]. When classifying beaches it should be taken into account that several beach categories exist, in accordance with which beach branding should be carried out. The Bathing Area Registration and Evaluation (BARE) system evaluates beach areas based on five factors [22]:

- safety,
- water quality,
- facilities,
- scenery and
- litter.

Different parameters and different parameter hierarchies can be applied to individual types of beaches. The

BARE system classifies beaches into five primary categories, based on their accessibility and coastal scenery [23]:

- natural beaches: remote beaches, rural beaches, and
- beaches with amenities: village beaches, urban beaches and resort beaches.

Based on the BARE system classification, the National Programme for the Management and Adaptation of Beaches [24] proposes a number of themed beaches, geared to target segments. The themed beaches are also differentiated by age groups, for example, beaches for families with children up to the age of seven, families with children aged 8 – 14, young people aged 18 – 24, etc. The National Programme presents 14 themed beaches: eco beaches, surfing beaches, diving beaches, adrenaline beaches, romantic beaches, beaches for dogs, beaches for families with children, party beaches, beaches for cultural events, nudist beaches, urban promenade beaches, beaches with entertainment facilities/services for young people, beaches with sport and recreational facilities/services, and resort beaches. A single beach area may feature several themes.

In Primorje-Gorki Kotar County the first inventory, comprising 325 beaches, was made in the 1999 study “Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County” by the County Institute for Development, Spatial Planning and Environmental Protection. In 2010 a GIS database was developed for all beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County where the quality of bathing water is analysed and monitored. In 2013 the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management delivered the pilot project “1000 Croatian Beaches: Adriatic Sea Stars of Kvarner” and in 2015 the Regional Programme for the Adaptation and Management of Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar was produced. The mentioned documents represent the basis for designing and managing the beach offering of Lovran.

Special attention, in terms of tourism, was first focused on the beach areas of Lovran at the onset of tourism development in the Opatija Riviera. With the adoption of the Territorial Law on Climate Health Resorts in 1898, Lovran was proclaimed a therapeutic-climate health resort and began to develop as a winter resort and seaside bathing resort, alongside Opatija. For a town to become a “spa and climate health resort”, it needed to show that it had bathing beaches with amenities and a sufficient number of “flats” to accommodate visitors, could provide board to visitors, and had a doctor and a pharmacy. In particular, the bathing (health) resort was obliged to draw up house rules, as well as a price list for rooms, food and beverages. Based on the Territorial Law on Climate Health Resorts, Lovran was proclaimed a therapeutic-climate health resort in 1898 and Opatija, in 1899. Opatija is officially considered the first seaside therapeutic-climate health resort in the Adriatic [25, 208]. Writing about bathing resort buildings and plans for their construction at the onset of tourism development in the Kvarner region, Kos Nalis [26, 186-189] states that there were a number of small-scale bathing facilities in Lovran, owned by guesthouses and

private villas. Although numerous, their numbers varied because most of them were prefabricated constructions that were disassembled in winter. The author makes mention of beach huts that were located below the villas Fernanda, Frappart and Astra. As early as 1894, the bathing beach facility of the Kvarner Society, located below Grand Hotel Lovran, was referred to as Madalena Bad. The wooden bathing facility on the beach in Peharovo Cove was opened in 1908. Both constructions were made of wood and most closely resembled the bathing facility "Angiolina" in Opatija. Today, no traces of these bathing facilities have been preserved. Because of their specific construction, however, a replica of such a bathing facility in Lovran would surely add to the appeal of the destination. In addition to the above beach facilities, at the end of the nineteenth century and start of the twentieth century Lovran was to have obtained yet another monumental beach facility designed by the architects W. Nalazinek and M. Schiavon. Unfortunately, the project was never realized. Bathing beach facilities constructed during the Austro-Hungarian era were a great asset, but very little is left of these buildings today.

Obviously, beaches on the Opatija Riviera have always been regarded as the most important resource and the main motivation of tourists to visit the destination, in particular in recent times when many Croatian destinations are developing summer leisure tourism [27]. The tourism

offering's focus on beaches is driving efforts to ensure the beaches are utilised in the best and most efficient way and are valorised as one of the tourist destination's most valuable resources. Lovran has 12 beaches, which are either natural or urban adapted beaches. The total surface of Lovran's beach area amounts to 43,011 m². The attributes of the beaches make them a resource base for summer leisure tourism. The beaches are of different sizes, the largest being the one in Medveja with a surface area covering 13,617 m² (Table 3). The design of the offering of beach activities will depend on the size of a beach.

Although very little research, up to date, has focused on the beaches of Lovran as the destination's most important resource, certain studies have at least partially included the beach areas of Lovran in their investigations. According to a 2012 survey [28] conducted in Lovran using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = extremely dissatisfied, 7 = extremely satisfied), tourists gave *clean sea* a score of 5.45; *scenery*, 5.6; *climate*, 5.82; *preserved environment*, 5.17; and *crowded beaches*, 5.2. The scores given by residents to the same elements were: *clean sea*, 3.87; *scenery*, 4.58; *climate*, 4.83; and *crowded beaches*, 3.65. The managers surveyed rated the elements as follows: *clean sea*, 5.25; *scenery*, 5.75; *climate*, 4.75; *preserved environment*, 5.00; and *crowded beaches*, 3.33.

As part of the Regional Plan, an analysis was conducted regarding the number of bathers in peak periods, tak-

Table 3 Beach resources of Lovran

BEACHES OF LOVRAN			
	Name of beach	Status of beach	Surface of beach (m ²)
1.	Beach below Hotel Excelsior	Adapted/urban/resort beach	464
2.	Bathing beach Kvarner Lovran	Adapted/urban beach	5,696
3.	Peharovo Beach	Adapted/urban beach	5,214
4.	Medveja Beach	Natural/adapted/local beach	13,617
5.	Cesara Beach in Medveja	Natural/remote beach	370
6.	Beach in the coastal zone Lovran – Medveja	Natural/remote beach	12,139
7.	Beach below Villa Medveja	Natural/adapted/local beach	207
8.	Beach below Villa Castello in Medveja	Natural/adapted/local beach	3,016
9.	Beach below Hotel Bristol	Adapted/urban/resort beach	783
10.	Beach below Villa Astra	Adapted/urban beach	375
11.	Beach below Hotel Lovran	Adapted/urban/resort beach	314
12.	Beach below Villa Sv. Rok	Natural/adapted/local beach	816
Total: 12			43,011

Source: By the author, after *Regional Plan for the Adaptation and Management of Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County*, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Rijeka, Opatija, p. 39.

Table 4 Analysis of number of bathers in the peak period in Lovran

	Persons	Contemporaneity	Bathers	Total number of bathers	m ² of beaches	Bathers per m ²
Residents	4,056	0.3	1,217	13,185	43,011	3.26
Tourists + weekenders	17,098	0.7	11,969			

Source: By the author, after *Regional Plan for the Adaptation and Management of Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County*, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Rijeka, Opatija, 2015, p. 155.

ing into consideration the number of residents and total number of possible tourists and weekenders in the destination (Table 4). The possibility of contemporaneous attendance at beaches amounted to 0.3 for residents and 0.7 for tourists together with weekenders (it is assumed that beaches are the main motivation for arrivals in the destination during summer months). The distribution of tourists on all beaches is not equal and 12,139 m² of space between Medveja and Lovran, where some pebble beaches are located and the sea can be accessed, were also taken into consideration. Below is a projection of the calculated number of bathers in the peak period which represents the largest number of bathers recorded at the height of the tourist season.

It should be noted that the above data are estimations and that more-precise data, that is, the actual number of bathers gravitating towards a specific area, will need to be used in the final approach to beach thematization.

Lovran's past is tied to seaside tourism but so is its present. Bringing together the resource bases the town already possesses, its historical assets (constructing a replica of one or more beach facilities) and the attitudes of residents concerning possible interventions in beach areas and the development of specific features of the offering would open up opportunities for creating added value for the destination's integrated tourism offering.

5 Opportunities for Improving the Beach Offering of Lovran

Every tourist destination seeks to develop its own specific tourism offering on the tourism market, based on the resource base it possesses. Historically speaking,

Lovran became a distinctive tourist destination thanks to its beaches. Research shows, however, that beaches need to be adequately managed if they are to create new added value in a destination's tourism offering. In addition to the value that beaches and the history of seaside bathing (bathing resort heritage) bring to a destination, modern tourist requirements call for further consideration focused on the conservation of beach areas as a valuable natural resource and on improving the existing offering. One of the ways of achieving the latter is through beach thematization, with specific themes being used to make beaches truly well-planned areas where tourists can spend their time. The proposal for the thematization of individual beaches in Lovran is linked neither to their current state nor to their status in spatial planning documents. Instead, it is the result of workshops conducted in Lovran in 2014 and 2015 and the forms submitted by local government and self-government authorities. The research instrument was the Beach Evaluation Form PL/14, prescribed by the Ministry of Tourism. The forms were filled out by the local self-government units within individual sub-regions and later collected by Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. In developing the Regional Plan, 406 PL/14 forms were analysed. A special document attached to the Regional Plan is the collection of all Beach Evaluation Forms of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, sorted by sub-regions. For the purpose of this paper, the sub-region of Lovran was selected [29, 2] Although beach thematization was put forward as a proposal, such initiatives need to be further developed in collaboration with the local community. Research shows that beach facilities/services should primarily focus on families with children but also on visitors seeking a higher quality of services, such as visitors to beaches with cul-

Table 5 Thematization proposal for Lovran's beaches

BEACHES OF LOVRAN		
	Name of beach	Proposed theme
1.	Beach below Hotel Excelsior	Resort beach – Hotel beach
2.	Bathing beach Kvarner Lovran	Beach with sport and recreational facilities/services, beach for families with children, beach with entertainment facilities/services for young people
3.	Peharovo Beach	Beach with sport and recreational facilities/services, beach for families with children, beach with entertainment facilities/services for young people
4.	Medveja Beach	Beach with sport and recreational facilities/services, beach for families with children, beach with entertainment facilities/services for young people
5.	Cesara Beach in Medveja	Romantic beach, nudist beach, eco beach
6.	Beach in the coastal zone Lovran – Medveja	Eco beach
7.	Beach below Villa Medveja	Beach with sport and recreational facilities/services
8.	Beach below Villa Castello in Medveja	Beach for cultural events
9.	Beach below Hotel Bristol	Resort beach – Hotel beach
10.	Beach below Villa Astra	Beach for cultural events
11.	Beach below Hotel Lovran	Resort beach – Hotel beach
12.	Beach below Villa Sv. Rok	Beach for cultural events
Total: 12		

Source: By the author, after *Regional Plan for the Adaptation and Management of Seaside Beaches in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County*, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Rijeka, Opatija, 2015, p. 146.

tural events, romantic beaches, etc. Table 5 presents the proposal for the thematization of beach areas in Lovran. Based on a beach zoning system, a single beach – the Medveja beach, for example – could have several different themes, or a single theme could be applied to a number of different types of beaches. The thematization proposal indicates the need for designing additional creative elements in the offerings of individual beaches. Creativity opens up opportunities for novel facilities/service on beaches, while the Regional Plan stipulates which facilities/services and standards a beach must have to create an offering.

The Regional Plan defines the minimal technical conditions and special elements required for each individual beach theme. For example, the minimal technical conditions for beaches for cultural events [29, 128] include information boards, measurement of sea and beach cleanliness, drinking water, showers, marker buoys, Wi-Fi, lifeguards and lifesaving equipment, first aid kit, access to the beach and sea for persons with special needs, a carrying capacity of 8 m²/person, changing booths, info-point with information of cultural events, the organisation of at least five cultural events during the bathing season, and at least one catering facility in the category of restaurant or bar. Special elements include beach chairs and beach umbrellas, parking space and a firefighting system. Beaches for cultural events, in addition to presenting the cultural offering (including the food-and-wine offering), also provide opportunities for creating new spaces in which visitors can spend their time during holidays. In these spaces, the destination's creative offering could be developed through a variety of workshops and summer schools focusing on the sea and traditions of Lovran (for example, the preparation of simple fish dishes, fish salting, learning marine skills, etc.). Adapted spaces with the appropriate infrastructure for individual themes provide opportunities to destination managers as well as entrepreneurs to focus their efforts on new potential tourists who are looking for more than just bathing, swimming and spending time in an accommodation facility. According to Rudan [30], the creative offering should be developed in a way that will not jeopardise the assets of cultural resources or the local community's quality of life; creativity should drive local economic development and provide new jobs for residents. The local community is a component of creative tourism and the creation of a creative offering. Hence, creativity depends not only on the product but also on the space and local community in which the process takes place.

6 Conclusion

The tradition of seaside bathing, in the context of specifically built facilities, is reflected in intangible heritage (the social life connected with the tradition) and partially in tangible heritage (beach architecture) and the lost fragments of the identity and urbanity of seaside towns. Among other things, this paper warns of the disappearance of this threatened cultural and tourism-related heritage, which includes the beaches of Lovran. Good beach

management and maintenance implies the protection of nature and the coastal zone and the efficient use of resources for the rest and relaxation of residents as well as tourists. Being one of the most important resources of the destination, the beaches should not be neglected but at the same time should not be destroyed through inappropriate interventions, implying the beaches should be managed in compliance with ecological standards, taking into account the needs of both residents and tourists. In this paper the authors have proposed various themes for the beaches of Lovran while highlighting the possibility of reconstructing the valuable bathing beach heritage that Lovran possessed at the beginning of its tourism development in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Tied to fishing, Lovran is a small town with a rich gastronomic offering and a part of that offering could be provided through beaches for cultural events. Various types of the creative offering could focus on lessons on fishing and the sea, as well as on the preparation of fish-based dishes (for example, classes on cooking, fish salting, preparing fish stews, etc.). Swimming and rowing lessons, exercises in the sea, etc. could be organised on beaches for families with children. The design and delivery of new forms of the tourism product will enable Lovran to create and reinforce its identity as a destination that makes its living by the sea and from the sea.

Lovran is a destination capable of providing more, especially with regard to the creative offering. Its beach offering, hence, needs to be improved, taking into consideration the attitudes of residents, tourists and destination managers. Prior to decision making, it is recommended to conduct further studies to analyse the attitudes of the destination's stakeholders. The limitation of this paper is seen in the estimated data for beach areas.

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