

The Internet as a source of information about local agro - food products

Internet kao izvor informacija o lokalnim poljoprivredno – prehrambenim proizvodima

Milan OPLANIC¹, Ana TEŽAK DAMIJANIĆ¹, Darko SAFTIĆ² and Ana ČEHIĆ¹ (✉)

¹ Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Economics and Agricultural Development, K. Huguesa 8, 52440 Poreč, Croatia

² City of Poreč, Department of Budget and Economy, Obala M. Tita 5/1, 52440 Poreč, Croatia

✉ Corresponding author: acehic@iptpo.hr

ABSTRACT

This paper explores usage of the Internet in relationship to local agro - food products of a tourist destination. The goals are 1) to examine availability of information about local agro - food products using different Internet tools and 2) to predict what types of websites are related to tourists' searches for information about local agro - food products based on responders' demographic characteristics. Two studies were conducted. The first included tourists who visited nine seaside tourist resorts, while the second focused on the content of different tourism-related websites. Data were processed using univariate (frequencies and percentages) and multivariate (logistic regression) statistics. Travel social networks and social networks were the most important information sources for tourists, while their demographic characteristics were somewhat significant in searching for information. Search engines were not very useful. Websites of tourism companies, tourist boards and local authorities provided some information.

Keywords: development, information, local agricultural products, sustainability, the internet, tourist destinations

SAŽETAK

U radu je istražena uloga Interneta u pogledu pretrage lokalnih poljoprivredno – prehrambenih proizvoda u turističkoj destinaciji. Ciljevi rada su: 1) istražiti dostupnost informacija o lokalnim poljoprivredno – prehrambenim proizvodima koristeći različite Internet alate i 2) predvidjeti koje web stranice turisti koriste za pretraživanje informacija o lokalnim poljoprivredno – prehrambenim proizvodima na temelju demografskih obilježja sudionika. Dvije studije su provedene. Prva je uključivala turiste koji su posjetili devet priobalnih ljetovališta, dok je druga usmjerena na analizu sadržaja različitih turističkih web stranica. Podaci su obrađeni putem univarijatne (frekvencije i postoci) i multivarijatne statistike (logistička regresija). Putničke društvene mreže i društvene mreže su najvažniji izvor informacija za turiste. Demografska obilježja turista – spol, dob i obrazovanje u pojedinim segmentima značajno su utjecali na traženje informacija. Internet tražilice nisu bile značajnije korištene. Web stranice turističkih tvrtki, turističkih zajednica i lokalne samouprave pružile su poneke informacije.

Ključne riječi: informacije, internet, lokalni poljoprivredno - prehrambeni proizvodi, održivost, razvoj, turističke destinacije

INTRODUCTION

Local agro - food products may have major implications for the economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism destinations, with researchers arguing that a focus on locally sourced products can result in benefits for both hosts and guests (Torres, 2002; Boniface, 2003). Local foods are considered as an important component of tourism products, creating memorable travel experience for the tourists (McKercher et al., 2008; Robinson and Getz, 2014). There is great potential for food producers in tourist destinations to add value to their products by creating a special experience for tourists (Hjalager and Richards, 2002).

Food is one of the most distinctive marketing components for a destination (Kim et al., 2009; Björk and Kauppinen - Räsänen, 2014), the focus on particular types of local foods can be helpful in developing the sustainability of the local economy through tourism. "The local food holds much potential in enhancing sustainability in tourism; contributing to the authenticity of the destination; strengthening the local economy; and providing a more environmentally friendly infrastructure" (Du Rand et al., 2003).

However, information about local agro - food should be easily accessible to tourists through different sources when they are searching for information about their travel, destination and special offers. This search includes internal and a larger number of external sources of information. Information stored in one's own memory is an internal source of information. Brščić et al. (2013) affirm, the Internet offers various opportunities for promotions and for those who sell and buy agrotourism products and it is important to "be in trend". The search process often encompasses a larger number of external sources of information, including recommendations from friends and family, specialized literature, consultations with professionals and the Internet as an increasingly common source (Ho et al., 2012). Fodness and Murray (1999) stated that information in the context of the tourism industry can be classified by source (commercial versus non-commercial) and by type (personal versus

impersonal). This traditional classification reflects an outdated notion that consumers prefer traditional sources of information, e.g., agencies searching for information about the destination by making direct contact with service providers (Heung, 2003). The epochal and rapid increase of the use of the Internet has enabled the mass usage of different electronic media as sources of information in the trip planning process (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Liang et al., 2013), making the Internet one of the most important sources of information in tourism (Frías et al., 2012).

A new generation of tourist websites, so-called Travel 2.0 or Web 2.0, provides tourist information in a very different way compared to not only the traditional sources of information used in tourism, but also the previous generation of tourist websites. Web 2.0 makes it possible for tourists to experience a fully interactive relationship with the online medium by encompassing a bunch of tools or applications. Tourists can share their travel experiences online (i.e., destination websites, hotel and other accommodation websites, social networks focusing on trips, discussion forums, blogs), post personal comments combined with multimedia objects (pictures, videos, augmented reality, etc.) and get interactive comments and feedbacks from other users (Nielsen and Liburd, 2008; Dominguez and Araujo, 2012, cited in Hernández-Méndez, et al., 2015).

The advantages of the Internet, such as availability, convenience, interactive communication, and unlimited time boundaries (Kim et al., 2009), have made it an indispensable decision-making tool for the modern traveller who is rich in money but poor in time (Dunne et al., 2011). There are multiple reasons for tourists to seek information about destinations on the Internet. Saving time and ease of use are among the main reasons for tourists to search for information online (Heung, 2003). Most tourists who use the web as a source of information express satisfaction with their experiences (Fesenmaier et al., 2009).

Recent research showed that the Internet is the most common source of information for tourists before

they take a trip (Ipsos MediaCT, 2014) because 41% of tourists and 50% of business travellers create their travel plans using information from the Internet. The majority of tourists in the US used the Internet as a source of information when planning a trip (Litvin et al., 2008), a trend that has increased significantly in recent years (Dominguez and Araujo, 2012 cited in Hernández-Méndez, 2015; Ipsos MediaCT, 2014).

The Google Travel Study (Ipsos MediaCT, 2014) was conducted using a sample of 5,000 tourists who travelled at least once every half-year period. It found that most online users prefer to use the main Internet search engines (e.g., Google, Yahoo) rather than specialized tourism search engines when planning a travel. Internet search engines were used by 64% of respondents for tourist trips and by 56% for business travel. Specialized web portals (e.g., Tripadvisor, Expedia) were used in 52% of cases for planning tourist trips and 55% for business travel. Looking at hotel guests only, it was found that 81% of business and 67% of private guests search for information about hotel accommodations through search engines. Other research has found that Google, YouTube and Facebook are the most visited websites worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2017).

According to research by the Pew Research Center about demographic characteristics of social networks users, social networks are being used by members of the younger population, mostly from 18 to 29 years of age. The most popular social network is Facebook, which is used by 67% of the total Internet user population, followed Twitter with 16% of users (Duggan and Brenner, 2013). In the actual era of Web 2.0, the Internet plays an enormous role as the most widely used source of relevant tourist information, including information about potential destinations, services and activities. Proper design of tourism websites, especially the official DMO's websites, is crucial in marketing food tourism because it can assure the efficient and high visible presentation of all essential information for tourists (Horng and Tsai, 2010).

Information about tourist destinations is nowadays accessed through a new generation of websites. They

represent the most commonly used tools, and some of the tools mentioned above (social networks, interactive travel websites or virtual communities and travel blogs) can be highlighted. Recent research (Ipsos MediaCT, 2014) has shown that 65% of leisure travellers in the US generally begin searching online for information before they decide where or how they want to travel, while 74% of leisure travellers use the Internet as a planning source. Typically, 60% of leisure travellers used search engines to plan their trips, while 48% used hotel sites/apps and 40% used online travel agencies. The results also stressed that 94% of leisure travellers booked certain services using online travel agency sites/apps (OTA). Their reasons for choosing a specific online travel agency site were lower prices/better deals (76%), positive past experience or recommendations for the site (56%), they have heard the name before (39%), better tools and options on the site (32%), loyalty/ rewards programs (25%) and it is what came up at the top of a search engine search (17%).

According to the research by the Pew Research Center about demographic characteristics of social networks users, several differences in using the Internet as a source of tourist information arise from tourists' different sociodemographic characteristics. These differences can arise from tourists' gender, but age, education level, income and type of work can be typical factors in profiling tourists' usage of the Internet. Huang et al. (2009) found that it is more difficult for women to use social networking to search for travel information than men and to express their opinions on the web compared to men. This may not be a general rule, because another study (Del Chiappa, 2011) established that women are more inclined to post comments, reviews, photos and videos online and also change a reservation of an accommodation they have already made more often than men after reading other online users' reviews. Fesenmaier et al. (2009) suggested that the typical Internet user who organizes his own trips is a full-time employed married man, aged between 30-50 years. Gretzel et al. (2007) pointed out that social networks users are characterized by mostly having high education and income levels and better skills in using the Internet. Bronner and de Hoog (2011) concluded that

tourists who usually post comments on the Internet are, generally speaking, under the age of 55, not single and have a non-average income (above or below the average income). The differences in the use of the Internet could contribute to how tourists can access information about local food in tourist destinations.

This research takes into account the importance of local agro - food as a part of gastronomy in tourism destinations (Du Rand et al., 2003) and focuses on use of the Internet as a source of information in the decision-making process when selecting a tourist destination (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Dunne et al., 2011; Frias et al., 2012; Liang et al., 2013).

The purpose of this paper is to explore usage of the Internet in relationship to local agro – food products of tourist destinations. The goals of the paper are twofold. The first is to examine availability of information about local agro – food products using different Internet tools, while the second is to predict what types of websites are related to tourists' search for information about local agro - food products with respect to responders' demographic characteristics.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two separate studies were conducted to examine usage of the Internet in relationship to local agro - food products of tourist destinations. The first study focused on tourists' usage of the Internet and social networking websites in tourism contexts, while the second study examined the content of different tourism-related websites about local agro – food products.

The study on tourists included those tourists who visited nine seaside tourist resorts in Istria County tourist destinations: Umag, Novigrad, Poreč, Vrsar, Funtana, Rovinj, Pula, Medulin and Rabac. It was conducted from July to September 2015 and was carried out in 20 hotels and six camping sites through a self-completed questionnaire. Tourists were approached by trained researchers and asked to participate in the survey. The researcher explained the purpose of the survey, said that the survey was anonymous and handed out a

questionnaire in the appropriate language. During on-site data collection in hotels, researchers were stationary while responders were mobile, while at camping sites, researchers were mobile while responders were stationary (Veal, 2006). A convenience sample was used. Hotels and camping sites were preselected based on location, i.e., they were located in seaside tourists resorts and each hotel's capacity was from 100 to 500 rooms, while camping sites' capacity varied between 1,000 and 5,000 people.

A questionnaire was constructed to gather data that consisted of 16 questions divided into six sections: 1) general usage of the Internet, tourist websites and social networking websites, 2) usage of the Internet and social networking websites for organizing vacations, 3) benefits and obstacles in using travel and social networking websites, 4) usage of the Internet and social networking websites during vacation, 5) post-vacation usage of the Internet and social networking websites and 6) respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (country of origin, age, gender, income level, occupation, size of settlement, travelling party) and trip characteristics (number of visits, length of stay and sources of information). It was originally designed in Croatian and then back translated into English, German, Italian and Slovenian.

In all, 2000 questionnaires were prepared and handed out to the respondents; 1554 questionnaires were accepted for analysis. Data were processed using univariate and multivariate statistics. Univariate statistics were used for general description of the sample, while multivariate statistics were used to predict tourists' searches for information about traditional agro - food products. Logistic regression was used to predict tourists' searches for information about traditional agro - food products and to avoid the problem of overestimation of significance (Dolnicar, 2008). To predict tourists' searches for information about local agro – food products, a two-stage process was adopted (Dolnicar, 2008). Responders were first segmented based on their demographic characteristics, namely gender, age and education. Then

they were grouped based on whether they searched for information about traditional agro - food products when they were planning their vacations. Criterion, i.e., the dependent variable, was binary coded (searched for information/did not search for information) (Field, 2005). Independent variables were different types of websites: on-line travel agencies, browsers, travel blogs, travel price comparison websites, photo/video sharing sites, social networking sites, travel social networking sites. The independent variables were also binary coded (used/not used).

The study regarding the content of different tourism-related websites in relationship to local agro - food products was conducted from September through October 2016. It examined the websites' content of the following tourism stakeholders: Istria County Tourist Board and local tourist boards in Istria County, towns and municipalities in Istria County, and websites of seven major tourism companies. Content analysis included 1) words that were used to describe agro - food products offered in Istria County; 2) usage frequency of the following words used in relationship to products offers: "traditional", "typical", "autochthonous", "homemade", "origin" and "local"; and 3) foreign languages available on websites. This research also included a search for results provided by four web search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo and Ask). When using search engines, the words "food and beverage Istria" were used along with the words "traditional", "typical", "autochthonous", "homemade", "origin" and "local" in Croatian and three foreign languages (English, German and Italian). This part of the research focused on results provided by each of several search engines and examined the sources of the first ten results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of tourists

The proportion of female responders (54%) was slightly higher than that of males. Most of the responders were between 35 and 54 years of age (53%). The majority of responders had obtained some kind of higher education

level (58%). The responders had different backgrounds and occupations. Most stated that they were employees (56%), while 13% were self-employed or freelance. Most responders were from Austria (23%), about 18% were from Italy and 17% were from Germany. Most of the responders stated that their monthly net income was between €1,000 and €2,000 (31%). They mostly were staying in the accommodation facility for the first time (82%), but most of them had already visited Istria County as a tourist destination (52%). The Internet was mostly used to search for information about accommodations (71%) and beaches (51%) (Table 1). This situation may be directly linked to the perception of Istria as being a tourist destination offering "sun and sea vacations". Local agro - food products were the focus for only 11% of responders, which is slightly lower compared to information about restaurants (20%), which suggests a certain interdependency between them. Thus, responders interested in restaurants are more likely to search for information about local agro - food products. Most responders (50%) have used travel social networking sites like TripAdvisor to get information about different tourist destinations. About 30% have used browsers and/or on-line travel agencies.

Travel social sites (64%) and web browsers (41%) were the most used tools of those responders who searched for information about traditional agro - food products (Table 1), but they were also the most used tools even for those responders who did not search for information about local agro - food products.

Tourists' search patterns

Demographic characteristics have a certain impact on usage of the Internet (Gretzel et al., 2007; Matzler et al., 2008; Fesenmaier et al., 2009; Huang et al., 2009; Yoo and Gretzel, 2010; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Del Chiappa, 2011). Several different logistic regressions were performed to predict what types of websites are related to tourists' demographic characteristics for searches information about traditional agro - food products. In terms of responders' gender, only the logistic regression

Table 1. Usage of the Internet for searching for information about local agro - food products, users versus non-users of tools

Variable	Searched information about traditional agro - food products		Not searched information about traditional agro - food products	
	Non-users	Users	Non-users	Users
On-line travel agencies	60.9%	39.1%	69.2%	30.8%
Browsers	59.2%	40.8%	68.2%	31.8%
Travel blogs	92.9%	7.1%	95.3%	4.7%
Travel Price Comparison websites	80.5%	19.5%	84.9%	15.1%
Photo/video sharing sites	89.9%	10.1%	93.9%	6.1%
Social Networking sites	82.2%	17.8%	92.6%	7.4%
Travel social sites	36.1%	63.9%	51.3%	48.7%

The variable "not searched information about traditional agro - food products" refers to the percentage of responders who use Internet for searching information about different things such as accommodation facilities and beaches, but not for searching information about agro - food products.

for female responders was significant (Table 2). The model explained between 3.5% and 6.6% of variance. Significant predictors of female responder tourists' searches for information about traditional agro - food products were social networking sites and travel social networking sites.

Considering responders' age as an important determinant in usage of the Internet, tourists were divided into three groups: young (from 16 to 34), middle (from 35 to 49) and old (50 and older) (Matzler et al., 2008). Three logistic regressions were done (Table 3), but only two models were significant, i.e., young and old. The young model explained between 3.8% and 7% of variance. Significant predictors of younger responder tourists' searches for information about traditional agro - food products were on-line travel agencies, social networking sites and travel social networking sites. All three variables increased the odds of being in groups interested in searching for information about traditional agro - food products. On the other hand, only one predictor, i.e., travel social networking sites, was significant in the old regression model, and this predictor also increased the odds of being in groups interested in

searching for information about traditional agro - food products. The old model explained between 4.6% and 10.2% of variance.

Responders' education was recoded into two categories, so two models emerged. Both models were significant (Table 4). The first model, i.e., high school and less, explained between 3.7% and 9.1% of variance, while the second model, i.e., college and more, explained between 3.7% and 6.8% of variance. Travel social networking sites were a significant variable in both models, increasing the odds of being in groups interested in searching for information about traditional agro - food products. Two other variables were significant in the second model, on-line travel agencies and social networking sites. Both variables increased the odds of being in groups interested in searching for information about traditional agro - food products.

The results showed that travel social networks and social networks are the most important sources of information for tourists, confirming findings by Dominguez and Araujo (2012 cited in Hernández-Méndez et al., 2015) and Nielsen and Liburd (2008). Social networking sites

Table 2. Usage of the Internet for searching for information about local agro - food products, users versus non-users of tools

Variable	Male			Female		
	B	SE	z	B	SE	z
On-line travel agencies	0.129	0.298	0.433	0.437	0.238	1.84
Browsers	0.499	0.28	1.783	0.353	0.237	1.487
Travel blogs	-0.153	0.77	-0.198	-0.046	0.462	-0.101
Travel Price Comparison websites	0.02	0.389	0.052	-0.12	0.305	-0.394
Photo/video sharing sites	-0.569	0.769	-0.741	0.521	0.393	1.327
Social networking sites	0.496	0.446	1.111	0.98**	0.332	2.951
Travel social networking sites	0.664*	0.286	2.325	0.748**	0.239	3.124
Constant	-2.909***	0.289	-10.053	-2.786***	0.239	-11.657
X ² (df)		9.914 (7)			26.601*** (7)	
Cox & Snell R Square		0.015			0.035	
Nagelkerke R Square		0.034			0.066	

*** α significant at 0.001, ** α significant at 0.01, * α significant at 0.05

were a source of information that was most likely used by women, younger tourists and tourists who obtained higher education levels, while on-line travel agencies are a source of information for younger tourists and tourists who had obtained higher education levels. These findings partially support the results of previous researchers (Gretzel et al., 2007; Fesenmaier et al., 2009; Yoo and Gretzel, 2010; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Del Chiappa, 2011; Munar and Jacobsen, 2013).

When searching for information about tourist destinations' attributes, tourists can use different tools. Web search engines are such tools. To determine the availability of information about local agro – food products in Istria County, four different web search engines (most commonly used by tourists) were used. Searches were conducted in four languages, i.e., Croatian, English, Italian and German. For browsing purposes, the

key words "food and beverages Istria" were used. Six additional words were used along with the key word: "traditional", "typical", "autochthonous", "homemade", "origin" and "local". The average number of search engine results was calculated for the seven options. Searches in English language yielded the most results (from 15,857 for Ask to 193,024,286 for Yahoo), with German being the second language with the most results (from 16,076 for Ask to 2,799,557 for Yahoo). Usage of "origin" and "authentic" with "food and beverages Istria" generated the least number of search engine results.

The sources of the first ten results were then analysed because they appeared on the first page and are usually the first sources users browse. Sources tended to be similar for each language, regardless of the search engine used. One of the most important sources of information should be the Istria Tourist board and local tourists' boards

Table 3. Results of logistic regression – age

Variable	Male			Female			Old		
	B	SE	z	B	SE	z	B	SE	z
On-line travel agencies	0.596*	0.288	2.07	0.311	0.293	1.062	0.361	0.41	0.881
Browsers	0.17	0.281	0.605	0.548	0.292	1.881	0.707	0.394	1.796
Travel blogs	-0.154	0.546	-0.282	0.067	0.671	0.101	0.82	0.944	0.868
Travel Price Comparison websites	0.265	0.339	0.781	-0.197	0.412	-0.478	-0.329	0.576	-0.572
Photo/video sharing sites	-0.269	0.566	-0.476	0.199	0.527	0.377	1.28	0.702	1.823
Social networking sites	1.131**	0.36	3.143	0.65	0.468	1.389	-0.407	0.824	-0.494
Travel social networking sites	0.741*	0.293	2.528	0.657*	0.291	2.259	1.056*	0.422	2.501
Constant	-2.781***	0.305	-9.13	-2.949***	0.291	-10.129	-3.414***	0.415	-8.231
X ² (df)	19.473** (7)			11.321 (7)			16.368* (7)		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.0383			0.0188			0.0459		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.0701			0.0403			0.1017		

*** α significant at 0.001, ** α significant at 0.01, * α significant at 0.05

in Istria County. However, when using the key words alone or combined with additional words, the maximum number of search engine results for Istria Tourist Board and local tourists' boards in Istria County was three (Table 5). Web search engines usually showed only one result for tourist boards' websites.

Tourism companies represent a crucial stakeholder in tourism because they provide the basic attributes (accommodation and catering), so presentation of tourist destinations through their websites plays an important part in the process of acquiring information about destinations. Tourist boards, municipalities and towns in Istria County were included in this research.

Seven larger tourism company websites were analysed. Every website had information about local agro – food products in Istria County. The term they mostly used for describing it was "Mediterranean", e.g., cuisine, taste.

The word "local" was the most commonly used word to describe agro – food products and dishes that are typical for the destination (Table 6). Another word that was also usually used was "traditional". Generally speaking, their gastronomy sections contained either very little information or were presented through the offer of their restaurants. Istria Tourist Board provided very detailed information mostly focused on particular ingredients (like Istrian prosciutto, wine, olive oil, asparagus and truffles,) and the preferred term used to describe typical Istrian food was "homemade". The pattern of using the term "homemade" is present on Internet sites of other smaller tourist boards in Istria County. Most do provide the same information about local food in Istria County either by listing restaurants or by providing a bit more information about events related to typical Istrian agro – food products. Websites of towns and municipalities in Istria County generally provide very little information

Table 4. Results of logistic regression – education

Variable	High school and less			College and more		
	B	SE	z	B	SE	z
On-line travel agencies	0.309	0.357	0.865	0.47*	0.211	2.222
Browsers	0.57	0.342	1.666	0.232	0.212	1.09
Travel blogs	-18.276	7,427.391	-0.002	0.527	0.386	1.364
Travel Price Comparison websites	-0.19	0.444	-0.428	0.207	0.274	0.754
Photo/video sharing sites	-18.472	6,219.94	-0.003	0.645	0.349	1.85
Social networking sites	0.84	0.493	1.704	0.742*	0.299	2.478
Travel social networking sites	0.995**	0.342	2.909	0.558**	0.216	2.586
Constant	-3.307***	0.336	-9.849	-2.653***	0.221	-12.006
X ² (df)	22.836*** (7)			31.653*** (7)		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.037			0.037		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.091			0.068		

*** α significant at 0.001, ** α significant at 0.01, * α significant at 0.05

about tourism there. Only the website of one town contained information about typical Istrian agro – food products, and the term that was used to describe them was “autochthonous”.

Other important stakeholders for the tourism sector like municipalities and towns provided very little information about tourism in general, and information

about local agro – food products was practically non-existent. In promoting traditional agro – food products through the Internet, a main focus should be on travel social networking sites. Social networking sites and on-line travel agencies sites may be used to focus on a particular segment of tourists.

Table 5. Istria Tourist Board and/or other tourist boards in Istria County (Croatia) as the source listed in the first ten results in browsers

Language	Google		Bing		Yahoo		Ask	
	Mod	Max	Mod	Max	Mod	Max	Mod	Max
Croatian	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	3
English	1	2	n/a	2	1	2	1	2
Italian	1	2	1	2	1	2	3	3
German	3	3	2	2	n/a	2	2	2

Table 6. Usage frequency of words utilized for describing agro – food products offered in Istria County (in Croatian)

	Traditional	Typical	Autochthonous	Homemade	Origin	Local
Tourism companies	10	2	2	7	2	14
Istria Tourist board	4	3	6	30	9	4
Tourists boards in Istria County	48	13	32	70	14	15
Municipalities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Towns	1	0	3	2	0	0

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this paper suggest that in the context of developing sustainable tourist destinations in Istria, additional efforts should be made to simplify and facilitate the process of finding information about local Istrian agro – food products. Harmonization of terminology used to describe local Istrian agro – food products is strongly recommended to all important stakeholders for the tourism sector. This would increase visibility on web search engines. Furthermore, it would be helpful that some crucial tourism stakeholders (other than tourist boards) to include relevant, accurate and detailed information about local agro – food products on their own websites. This is particularly significant for crucial stakeholders located in rural parts of Istria (tourist companies and facilities, towns and municipalities, etc.), keeping in mind that most local groceries originate from these rural areas that in fact spatially cover almost all the territory of Istria.

The Internet as a source of information enables multiple usage of the same digital information by different users, and that should be viewed as a certain support for sustainable development of tourist destinations. Promotion of local agro – food products aids in promoting local values and culture, so using the Internet to promote local agro – food products creates a synergy in sustainable development of tourist destinations.

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