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STAVOVI DIONIKA PRIVATNOG SEKTORA O ODABRANIM ASPEKTIMA ODRŽIVOGA RAZVOJA CIKLOTURIZMA ISTARSKE ŽUPANIJE

ATTITUDES OF PRIVATE SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS SELECTED ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE CYCLING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ISTRIA COUNTY

SAŽETAK: U radu se analizira cikloturizam kao specifični oblik turizma iz perspektive lokanih dionika privatnog sektora, jer je za održivi razvoj cikloturizma i područja važno razumjeti i uvažiti mišljenja različitih skupina lokalnih dionika. Dionici, na temelju svog iskustva, mogu pomoći u identifikiranju ključnih smjernica za održiv razvoj cikloturizma u kontekstu razvojne perspektive održivosti. Ovaj rad ima za cilj utvrditi teme koje su lokalnim dionicima važne. Budući da je dosad zabilježen mali broj empirijskih istraživanja koja su se bavila temom cikloturizma, iz perspektive lokalnih dionika privatnog sektora, svrha rada je doprinijeti razumijevanju potreba i međuovisnosti lokalnih dionika cikloturizma. Istraživanje je provedeno u Istarskoj županiji, korištena je kvalitativna metoda istraživanja te je za analizu podataka korištena refleksivna tematska analiza. Identificirano je ukupno šest tema, odnosno kategorija koje je važno pratiti za održivi razvoj cikloturizma u destinaciji, a to su: Infrastruktura, Promocija, Suradnja, Organizacija manifestacija vezanih uz cikloturizam, Edukacija dionika i Koordinacija.

Ključne riječi: održivi razvoj turizma, cikloturizam, lokalni dionici, Istarska županija, kvalitativno istraživanje

ABSTRACT: The paper analyses cycling tourism as a special interest tourism from the perspective of local private sector stakeholders as understanding and acknowledging the opinions of various local stakeholder groups is essential for the sustainable development of this tourism type in the region. Based on their experience, stakeholders can facilitate identifying the key guidelines for the sustainable development of cycling tourism in the context of a sustainable development perspective. The paper aims to identify the topics that are important to local stakeholders. Given the limited number of empirical studies that have addressed the topic of cycling tourism from the perspective local private sector stakeholders, its goal is to contribute to understanding the needs and interdependencies of local stakeholders in cycling tourism. The research was conducted in Istria County, and qualitative research method was used with reflective thematic analysis for data analysis. A total of six topics, or catego-

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ries, were identified as important to monitor for the sustainable development of cycling tourism in the destination: Infrastructure, Promotion, Cooperation, Cycling tourism Event Organisation, Stakeholder Training and Coordination.

KEY WORDS: sustainable tourism development, cycling tourism, local stakeholders, Istria County, qualitative research

1. UVOD

Održivost u turizmu tema je kojom se bave različita međunarodna udruženja, ali i znanstvena zajednica (Santos *et al.*, 2022). Pojam održivog razvoja definiran je 80-ih godina prošlog stoljeća te, kako se navodi u Brundtland Reportu iz 1987. godine, podrazumijeva razvoj kojim se zadovoljavaju sadašnje potrebe, ali se ne ugrožavaju buduće generacije da zadovolje svoje potrebe (MINT, 2025; WCED, 1987; Santos *et al.*, 2022; Buhalis *et al.*, 2023). Kako navode Santos *et al.* (2022), pozivajući se na rad Cronje i Plessisvea (2020) koji su proveli sustavni pregled literature o konkurentnosti turističkih destinacija, održivost treba biti istraživana u kontekstu konkurentnosti turističkih destinacija. Održivi razvoj naglašava potrebu za dugoročnim planiranjem i uključivanjem svih relevantnih dionika u proces planiranja i upravljanja turizmom. Upravljanje turističkom destinacijom zahtjevno je zbog različitih dionika koji su uključeni u razvoj i kreiranje turističkog proizvoda (Buhalis, 2020). Razvoj turističkih destinacija prema načelima održivog razvoja turizma podrazumijeva uravnoteženo upravljanje ekonomskim, okolišnim i socio-kulturnim aspektima turizma (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2021; Torres-Delgado i Palomeque, 2014) s ciljem očuvanja prirodnih i kulturnih resursa te kvalitete života lokalnog stanovništva. Koristi od razvoja turizma u destinaciji treba imati što veći broj dionika (Heslinga *et al.*, 2019; Roxas *et al.*, 2020). U održivi razvoj turizma u destinaciji uključen je veliki broj dionika (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019), a osim toga, uključenost lokalne zajednice važna je za

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in tourism is a topic that is addressed by various international associations as well as the scientific community (Santos *et al.*, 2022). The concept of sustainable development was defined in the 1980s and, as stated in the Brundtland Report from 1987, implies development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (MINT, Sustainable Tourism 2025; WCED, 1987; Santos *et al.*, 2022; Buhalis *et al.*, 2023). As stated by Santos *et al.* (2022), referring to the work of Cronje and Plessis (2020), who conducted a systematic review of the literature on the competitiveness of tourism destinations, sustainability should be researched in the context of competitiveness in tourism destinations. Sustainable development emphasises the need for long-term planning and the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the tourism planning and management process. Tourism destination management is challenging due to the diverse stakeholders involved in the development and creation of a tourism product (Buhallis, 2020). The development of tourism destinations according to the principles of sustainable tourism development implies a balanced management of the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of tourism (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2021; Torres-Delgado and Palomeque, 2014) aimed at preserving natural and cultural resources and maintaining the quality of life of the local population. The development of tourism in a destination should benefit as many stakeholders as possible (Heslinga *et al.*, 2019; Roxas *et al.*, 2020). Numerous stakeholders are in-

održivi razvoj turizma destinacije (Heslinga *et al.*, 2019; Roxas *et al.*, 2020).

Pozivajući se na veći broj autora i radova koji su analizirali teoriju o dionicima počevši od Freemana (1984), Nguyen *et al.* (2019) ističu kako teorija o dionicima predstavlja platformu za raspravu o uspjehu turističke destinacije te da oni koji upravljaju destinacijom trebaju identificirati i razumjeti interese svih dionika (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). Naime, kako navode Freeman *et al.* (2020), „svaki poslovni sustav ugrađen je u skup većih sustava“ te je za dugoročnu održivost poslovanja važno razumjeti njegove komponente i međudnose, a to zahtijeva i analizu perspektive dionika (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Kada se teorija dionika spominje u kontekstu poduzeća, autori navode da uključivanje svih dionika u odlučivanje održava višu razinu svijesti menadžera zbog spoznaje o međupovezanosti i međuovisnosti, a to je različito kod menadžera koji su manje osviješteni i to jednostavno ne vide (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Prema jednom od ključnih kriterija u široj definiciji teorije dionika, da se bi se netko smatrao dionikom treba utvrditi ovisi li organizacija o njemu ili ne (Haigh i Griffiths, 2009, prema Stanford Research Institute, koji citira Freeman, 1984). Pri tome Haigh i Griffiths (2009) vide okoliš kao primarnog dionika, posebice u kontekstu klimatskih promjena.

S obzirom na prethodno navedeno, u ovom radu analiziraju se mišljenja lokalnih dionika privatnog sektora o razvojnim aspektima održivosti, koristeći tematsku analizu s ciljem utvrđivanja okvira za buduće donošenje odluka vezano uz temu održivog razvoja cikloturizma u turističkoj destinaciji te kreiranja podloge za daljnja istraživanja koja se odnose na teme vezane uz cikloturizam i/ili lokalne dionike.

Posljednjih godina, a posebice za vrijeme trajanja pandemije COVID-19, došlo je do značajnog rasta popularnosti cikloturizma kao oblika turizma koji podupire primjenu načela održivog razvoja. Specifični oblici tu-

volvied in a destination's sustainable tourism development (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019), and the participation of the local community is key (Heslinga *et al.*, 2019; Roxas *et al.*, 2020).

Referring to many authors and papers that have analysed stakeholder theory starting with Freeman (1984), Nguyen *et al.* (2019) emphasise that the stakeholder theory provides a platform for discussing the success of a tourism destination and that those who manage the destination need to identify and understand the interests of all stakeholders (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). Namely, Freeman *et al.* (2020) state that “every business system is embedded in a set of larger systems” and that long-term sustainability of the business requires understanding its components and interrelationships as well as analysing the stakeholder perspective (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Regarding this theory in the company context, they claim that including all stakeholders in decision-making maintains a higher level of awareness of business managers, through consideration of interconnections and interdependencies, unlike managers with a lower level of awareness who simply do not see it (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). One of the key criteria in the broader definition of stakeholder theory, being considered a stakeholder depends on whether the organization depends on them or not (Haigh and Griffiths, 2009, according to the Stanford Research Institute, citing Freeman, 1984). Haigh and Griffiths (2009) also deem the environment as the primary stakeholder, especially in the context of climate change.

Considering the aforementioned, the paper examines the opinions of local private sector stakeholders on the developmental aspects of sustainability by employing thematic analysis to establish a framework for future decision-making related to the sustainable development of cycling tourism in a tourism destination, and create groundwork for further research on cycling tourism and/or local stakeholders.

In recent years, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, cycling tourism

rizma prepoznati su kao funkcionalan način implementacije teorijskih načela održivog turizma u destinaciji.

S obzirom na to da je istraživanje provedeno tijekom pandemije COVID-19, potrebno je ukratko osvrnuti se na to razdoblje. Turistički sustav ima određene specifičnosti u odnosu na druge gospodarske aktivnosti. Naime, osim izravnih turističkih aktivnosti, uz turizam su povezane i brojne druge neizravne gospodarske aktivnosti. Tijekom pandemije COVID-19 ta je međuovisnost postala još jasnija (Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Statista, 2021). Jedna od ključnih razlika između prihoda turizma i drugih gospodarskih aktivnosti jest ta da su neostvareni prihodi od turizma, primjerice u kriznim godinama, zauvijek izgubljeni, dok bi drugi sektori mogli nadoknaditi pad prihoda u nekom od sljedećih razdoblja (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). Ramagosa (2020) je tijekom *lockdowna* istaknuo kako postoji stajalište da nakon pandemije ništa neće biti isto, osobito u sustavu turizma. Također, postalo je još jasnije da turizam, osim pozitivnih učinaka, može imati i negativne posljedice na turističku destinaciju (Papageorgiou, 2016; Drius *et al.*, 2019; Theng *et al.*, 2015). Primjerice, jedna od negativnih posljedica turizma jest značajna emisija stakleničkih plinova, što je tijekom *lockdowna* 2020. godine bilo posebno izraženo (Kitamura *et al.*, 2020). Ako izostane ozbiljan pristup rješavanju tog problema, sustav turizma mogao bi biti teško pogođen drugim, još ozbiljnijim krizama, poput klimatskih promjena (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). Nedostatak dugoročne vizije i održivog upravljanja turizmom predstavlja prijetnju turizmu te povećava rizik od negativnih posljedica budućih kriza (Romagosa, 2020; Jamal i Budke, 2020). Osim toga, može imati značajne negativne posljedice na tri stupa održivosti – ekološku, ekonomsku i socio-kulturnu održivost (Bakogiannis *et al.*, 2020; Budeanu, 2005; Georgakopoulou i Delitheou, 2020; Theng *et al.*, 2015).

has become an increasingly popular form of tourism, which supports the principle of sustainable development. Special interest tourism has been recognised as a functional way of implementing theoretical principles of sustainable tourism in a destination.

Given that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to briefly reflect on that period. The tourist sector has certain specific features in relation to other economic branches. Namely, apart from direct tourist activities, numerous other indirect economic activities are also associated with the tourism sector. During the COVID-19 pandemic, that interdependency became even clearer (Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Statista, 2021). One of the key differences between tourism sector income and that in other economic sectors is that the unrealised income from tourism, e.g. during the crisis years, is forever lost, whereas other sectors could compensate it in future periods (Gössling *et al.*, 2020). During the lockdown, Ramagosa (2020) stressed a viewpoint that nothing would be the same again, especially in the tourism sector. Moreover, it became clear that tourism, besides its positive impacts, could also affect tourism destinations (Papageorgiou, 2016; Drius *et al.*, 2019; Theng *et al.*, 2015). For example, one of the negative effects of tourism is considerable emission of greenhouse gases, which was particularly prominent during the 2020 lockdown (Kitamura *et al.*, 2020). Gössling *et al.* (2020) stated that if a serious approach to resolving the problem failed, the tourism sector could be affected by other even more serious crises, such as the climate change. The absence of a long-term vision and sustainable tourism management represents a threat to the tourism sector and increases the risk of negative consequences of future crises (Ramagosa, 2020; Jamal and Budke, 2020). Besides, it can harm the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, social and economic (Bakogiannis *et al.*, 2020; Budeanu, 2005; Georgakopoulou and Delitheou, 2020; Theng *et al.*, 2015).

Brojne turističke organizacije, kao što su UN Tourism, ICAO, CLIA, WTTC i druge, zagovaraju održivo upravljanje turizmom te potiču turističke dionike na razvoj destinacija u skladu s ciljevima održivog razvoja. Specifični oblici turizma, poput sportskog turizma ili sve popularnijeg cikloturizma, prepoznati su kao dobar odgovor na trenutne izazove s kojima se suočava turizam te kao alat za pretvaranje teorijskih načela održivog razvoja turizma u praktičnu primjenu (Lumsdon, 2000; Faulks *et al.*, 2007; Gazzola *et al.*, 2018; Pavione i Pezzetti, 2016; Luka, 2012; Simonsen *et al.*, 1998; Bakogiannis *et al.*, 2020; Ritchie i Hall, 1999; Simeoni i De Crescenzo, 2018). U svom radu, Gazzola *et al.* (2018) navode da se cikloturizam može promatrati „kao pokretač lokalnog razvoja koji, kroz suradnju, može doprinosti ekonomskim, socio-kulturnim i okolišnim koristima lokalne zajednice“. Da bi se to postiglo, tijekom razvoja cikloturizma potrebno je odgovorno upravljati ograničenim resursima destinacije, uz istovremeno zadovoljavanje potreba lokalnog stanovništva i turista (Angeloni, 2013). U tom kontekstu treba navesti da je Müller (1994) još prije mnogo godina istaknuo pet ključnih kategorija koje treba jednako uzeti u obzir pri razvoju turizma: ekonomsku stabilnost, subjektivno blagostanje lokalnog stanovništva, očuvanje prirode i zaštitu resursa, zdravu kulturu i optimalno zadovoljstvo gostiju. Sve navedeno ukazuje na važnost utvrđivanja mišljenja lokalnih dionika koji pružaju usluge važne za razvoj cikloturizma u destinaciji te čije je izravno djelovanje u ovom području ključno za buduću razvoj cikloturizma. Naime, očekuje se da će lokalni dionici podržati njegov daljnji razvoj ako smatraju da on doprinosi njihovoj dobrobiti, odnosno dobrobiti njihove zajednice. Primjerice, neki su autori prikazali različitosti odnosno sličnosti u percepciji i stavovima o utjecaju razvoja turizma između različitih grupa dionika, poput istraživanja koje je uključivalo stanovnike, poduzetnike, državne službenike i turiste (Byrd *et al.*,

Numerous tourism organisations, such as UNWTO, ICAO, CLIA, WTTC, etc., advocate sustainable tourism management and encourage tourism stakeholders to develop destinations in line with the goals of sustainable development. Special interest tourism, like sports tourism or increasingly popular cycling tourism, are viewed as a fitting reply to the current challenges in the tourism sector and as a tool for applying theoretical principles of sustainable development of tourism to practice (Lumsdon, 2000; Faulks *et al.*, 2007; Gazzola *et al.*, 2018; Pavione and Pezzetti, 2016; Luka, 2012; Simonsen *et al.*, 1998; Bakogiannis *et al.*, 2020; Ritchie and Hall, 1999; Simeoni and De Crescenzo, 2018). Gazzola *et al.* (2018) state that cycling tourism can be observed as “a driver of local development which, through collaboration, can contribute to economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits of the local community”. To achieve this, it is necessary to manage limited destination resources responsibly when developing cycling tourism while simultaneously fulfilling the needs of both the local population and tourists (Angeloni, 2013). Thus, Müller (1994) pointed out long ago five key categories that should be taken onto consideration equally in tourism development: economic stability, subjective well-being of the local population, preservation of nature and protection of resources, sound culture and optimal guest satisfaction. These categories point to the importance of determination of opinions of the local stakeholders who provide the services of importance for the development of cycling tourism in the destination and whose direct activities are crucial for the future development of cycling tourism. Namely, the local stakeholders are likely to support its further development if they believe that it contributes to their benefit, i.e. the benefit of the community. For example, differences or similarities in the perceptions and attitudes on the impacts of tourism development between different groups of stakeholders are noted, like the research

2009) ili istraživanje autora Sánchez Cañizares *et al.* (2016) koje je uključivalo turiste, stanovnike i vlasnike poduzeća.

U ovom radu prikazuju se rezultati istraživanja koje je provedeno s lokalnim dionicima cikloturizma iz privatnog sektora. Lokalni dionici cikloturizma uključeni u istraživanje bili su: iznajmljivači turističkog smještaja, iznajmljivači uključeni u sustav Istra Bike&Bed, dionici koji nude druge usluge cikloturistima (biciklistički klubovi i/ili biciklistički vodiči), druge skupine lokalnih dionika koji izravno ili neizravno sudjeluju u cikloturizmu. Nakon provedenog istraživanja utvrđeno je da najveću skupinu ispitanika čine iznajmljivači smještajnih kapaciteta prilagođenih cikloturistima (uključeni u sustav Istra Bike&Bed). Rezultati istraživanja korisni su donositeljima odluka koji upravljaju razvojem cikloturizma. Nalazi istraživanja pružaju smjernice i za buduća istraživanja, posebno u kontekstu segmentacije lokalnih dionika i važnosti njihovog uključivanja u istraživanja vezana uz razvoj cikloturizma. Naime, postoji tek manji broj istraživanja koja su se odnosila na temu cikloturizma u Hrvatskoj (Breščić, 2025; Čučić *et al.*; 2024; Šobot *et al.*, 2024; Kovačić i Ivek, 2022; Brščić *et al.*, 2021), posebice iz perspektive lokalnih dionika pa je jedan od ciljeva rada umanjiti postojeći jaz.

2. CIKLOTURIZAM U KONTEKSTU ODRŽIVOG RAZVOJA TURIZMA

Kako bi pozitivna sinergija, koja nastaje spajanjem sporta i turizma u turističkoj destinaciji, bila jasnija, potrebno je najprije osvrnuti se na neke od općih izazova s kojima se susreće većina turističkih destinacija. Jedan od glavnih problema jest stvaranje gužvi u popularnim turističkim središtima, posebice posljednjih godina, uslijed stalnog rasta broja dolazaka turista (UNWTO, 2018). Razvoj novih oblika turizma može biti rješenje ovog problema, bilo uvođenjem nove

that included residents, entrepreneurs, civil servants and tourists (Byrd *et al.*, 2009) or tourists, residents and owners of businesses (Sánchez Cañizares *et al.* (2016).

The paper presents the findings of the research conducted with the local private sector stakeholders. The local cycling tourism stakeholders included in the research were: providers of tourist accommodation, renters included in the Istra Bike&Bed system, stakeholders who offer other services to cycling tourists (cycling clubs and/or cycling guides), and other groups of local stakeholders who participate in cycling tourism directly or indirectly. Following the conducted research, it was determined that the largest group of respondents consists of renters of accommodation facilities adapted to cycling tourists (included in the Istra Bike&Bed system). The research findings are useful for decision-makers who manage the development of cycling tourism. The research findings also provide guidelines for future research, especially in the context of segmentation of local stakeholders and the importance of their inclusion in research related to the development of cycling tourism. Namely, due to a smaller number of studies on cycling tourism in Croatia (Breščić, 2025; Čučić *et al.*, 2024; Šobot *et al.*, 2024; Kovačić and Ivek, 2022; Brščić *et al.*, 2021), especially from the perspective of local stakeholders, one of the goals of the paper is to reduce this gap.

2. CYCLING TOURISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

In order to emphasise positive synergy created by combining sport and tourism in a tourism destination, it is primarily necessary to reflect on some of the general challenges that most tourism destinations encounter. One of their problems are the crowds in popular tourism centres, especially in recent years, due to a continuous growth of tourist

turističke ponude ili prenamjenom postojeće usmjerene na aktivnosti izvan glavnih turističkih središta (Trauer, 2006) i izvan glavne turističke sezone (Škorić, 2008). Općenito, sportski turizam ima pozitivan ekonomski utjecaj u destinaciji (Škorić, 2008). Upravo je cikloturizam prepoznat kao učinkovit alat za razvoj sportskog turizma u destinaciji, koji doprinosi postizanju ekonomskih, okolišnih i socio-kulturnih dobiti za destinaciju (Dickinson i Robbins, 2009) te kao koristan alat za promicanje održivog turizma i unaprjeđenja gospodarskog razvoja područja (Šobot *et al.*; 2024, Piket *et al.*; 2013). Slično tvrde i Gazzola *et al.* (2018), navodeći da biciklizam može postati važan alat za teritorijalni marketing i lokalni razvoj te je u tom smislu važno razvijati marketinške planove.

Cikloturizam također predstavlja pozitivan odgovor na negativne posljedice po ljudsko zdravlje, koje proizlaze iz činjenice da veliki broj današnjih poslova uključuje fizički neaktivan rad i aktivnosti u zatvorenom prostoru (Karanikola *et al.*, 2018). Cikloturizam se može promatrati iz različitih perspektiva, odnosno kroz prizmu različitih politika i sektora. Točnije, može se analizirati iz perspektive turizma, korištenja zemljišta, zdravlja, okoliša i klime, energije te mobilnosti (Krell, 2020; Ahmed *et al.*, 2024). Kao oblik turizma, cikloturizam pridonosi usmjeravanju turista prema manje poznatim lokacijama i smanjenju urbanog onečišćenja, što je ujedno jedan od ciljeva kojima teže okolišno osviještene turističke destinacije (Gazzola *et al.*, 2018; Karanikola *et al.*, 2018). Osim što bicikli ne proizvode štetne emisije, cikloturizam se također potiče kao oblik javnog prijevoza i okolišno prihvatljivog transporta (Handy *et al.*, 2014). Ostale okolišne prednosti biciklizma uključuju smanjenje buke od prometa i uštedu prirodnih resursa. Primjerice, procjenjuje se da je 2017. godine korištenjem bicikla umjesto automobila uštedeno 2,8 milijardi eura (ECF, 2017). Proizvodnja bicikala zahtijeva znatno manje resursa u usporedbi s proizvodnjom automobila, a uveli-

arrivals (UNWTO, 2018). The development of new forms of tourism can solve this problem, either by introducing new tourist offer or by re-designing the existing offer that is directed at the activities outside the main tourism centres (Trauer, 2006) or the main tourist season (Škorić, 2008). In general, sports tourism has a positive economic impact on the destination (Škorić, 2008). It is cycling tourism that has been recognised as an effective tool for developing sports tourism in the destination, as it contributes to achieving economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits (Dickinson and Robbins, 2009) and as a valuable tool for promoting sustainable tourism and improving the economic development of the area (Šobot *et al.*, 2024; Piket *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, Gazzola *et al.* (2018) suggest that cycling tourism can become a crucial tool for territorial marketing and local development emphasising the importance of developing effective marketing plans (Gazzola *et al.*, 2018).

Cycling tourism is also a positive answer to the negative effects on human health arising from the lack of physical activity or working in closed spaces that is typical of numerous jobs today (Karanikola *et al.*, 2018). It can be observed from different perspectives, i.e. through a prism of different policies and sectors. More precisely, it can be analysed from the perspective of tourism, use of land, health, environment and climate, energy, and mobility (Krell, 2020; Ahmed *et al.*, 2024). As a type of tourism, cycling tourism contributes to directing tourists towards less known locations and reducing urban pollution, which is also one of the of goals environmentally aware tourism destinations (Gazzola *et al.*, 2018; Karanikola *et al.*, 2018). Besides the absence of harmful emissions, cycling tourism is encouraged as form of public and environmentally acceptable transport (Handy *et al.*, 2014). Other environmental advantages of cycling tourism include: reduction of traffic noise and saving natural resources. For example, in 2017 the use of bicycles instead of cars is estimated to have saved 2.8 billion euros

ke se odlikuju i visokom tehnologijom. To je rezultiralo većom prodajom električnih bicikala u odnosu na broj prodanih električnih automobila (ECF, 2017).

Stoga se može zaključiti da je cikloturizam održivi turistički proizvod koji, prema studiji autora Neun i Haubold (2016), doprinosi ostvarivanju čak 12 od 17 UN-ovih ciljeva održivog razvoja. Osim toga, kao što navode Palau *et al.* (2012), razvoj novih turističkih sadržaja, poput Girona Greenways, može doprinijeti smanjenju sezonalnosti u turističkim destinacijama. Osim toga, brdski biciklisti mogu imati pozitivan okolišni učinak svojim dolaskom u turističke destinacije prije početka i nakon završetka glavne turističke sezone (Pröbstl-Haider *et al.*, 2017). S time se slažu i Mundet *et al.* (2022), ističući kako razvoj cestovnog cikloturizma u destinaciji može doprinijeti smanjenju sezonalnosti te pozitivno utjecati na decentralizaciju turističkog poslovanja.

Cikloturizam se uglavnom spominje u pozitivnom kontekstu, kako za korisnike, tako i za destinaciju koja ga razvija. Konkretno, na razini Istarske županije to je i potvrđeno u provedenom istraživanju. Naime, lokalni dionici nisu se slagali s tvrdnjama koje su ukazivale na negativne aspekte cikloturizma (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

3. METODOLOGIJA

Istraživanje je provedeno u Istarskoj županiji koja je prva započela s razvojem cikloturizma u okviru marke Istra Bike te se može reći da je Istarska županija lider što se tiče cikloturizma u Hrvatskoj (Ćućić *et al.*, 2024). Kao što je navedeno u uvodnom dijelu, cilj rada je utvrditi prijedloge lokalnih dionika cikloturizma iz privatnog sektora vezane uz budući razvoj cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji. Istraživačka pitanja na koje se želi dati odgovor u radu su: *Kakvo je stanje cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji, odnosno, koji su postojeći pokazatelji razvo-*

(ECF, 2017). Bicycle manufacturing requires considerably fewer resources in comparison to manufacturing cars, and a great number of them are marked by high technology. This has led to higher sales of electric bicycles relative to electric cars (ECF, 2017).

Therefore, it can be concluded, that cycling tourism is a sustainable tourist product which, according to the study by the authors Neun and Haubold (2016), contributes to the realisation of as many as 12 of 17 UN sustainable development goals. Furthermore, as stated by Palau *et al.* (2012), the development of new tourism attractions, such as Girona Greenways, can contribute to the reduction of seasonality in tourism destinations. Apart from that, mountain cyclists can have a positive environmental effect by their visits to tourism destinations before and after the main tourist season (Pröbstl-Haider *et al.*, 2017). Mundet *et al.* agree stressing that the development of road cycling tourism in the destination can contribute to reducing seasonality and positively affect the decentralisation of the tourism business.

Cycling tourism is generally mentioned in a positive context, both with the users and the destination developing it. This has particularly been confirmed at the level of the Istria County by conducted research as the local stakeholders disagreed with the statements indicating negative aspects of cycling tourism (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in the Istria County, which was the first to develop cycling tourism under the Istra Bike brand and is arguably the leader in cycling tourism in Croatia (Ćućić *et al.*, 2024). As stated in the introduction, the aim of the paper is to identify the proposals of local private sector stakeholders in cycling tourism regarding the future development of cycling tourism in the Istria County. The research questions that seek answers in this paper are: *What is the state of*

ja cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji?, te Što lokalni dionici smatraju važnim za uspješan daljnji razvoj cikloturizma u Istri? Rezultati predstavljeni u radu dio su istraživanja koje je provedeno tijekom 2020. godine. Za potrebe istraživanja kreiran je upitnik temeljen na upitniku za turiste i posjetitelje Europskog sustava turističkih pokazatelja (ETIS, 2016), pri čemu su pitanja prilagođena temi ovog istraživanja, odnosno cikloturizmu. Pitanja u upitniku, kojima se istražuju mišljenja lokalnih dionika o utjecaju cikloturizma na destinaciju, preuzeta su i prilagođena iz studije autora Bull i Lovell (2007). Konačna verzija upitnika sastojala se od 25 različitih dihotomnih pitanja s višestrukim izborom, zatvorenih i otvorenih pitanja te višestrukih potpitanja. Naime, iako zatvorena pitanja rezultiraju standardiziranim odgovorima i bržom obradom podataka, otvorena pitanja potencijalno dovode do novih važnih saznanja, a koja bi moguće izostala ako se istraživanje temelji isključivo na unaprijed ponuđenim odgovorima (Kalton i Schuman, 1982). Otvorena pitanja koja su dio upitnika mogu dovesti do početnih spoznaja u području gdje nedostaje istraživanja (Singer i Couper, 2017), što je bio i motiv korištenja otvorenih pitanja u okviru ovog istraživanja.

Važno je napomenuti da su za potrebe ovog rada korištena samo neka od pitanja iz upitnika. Online upitnik pripremljen je u programu Microsoft Office 365, a zatim je e-mailom poslan lokalnim dionicima cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji. Popis kontakata ispitanika izrađen je korištenjem popisa vlasnika specijaliziranog smještaja za bicikliste u Istri – Istra Bike&Bed, dostupnog na službenoj web stranici Istra Bike. Također, turističke zajednice s područja Istarske županije zamoljene su da prosljede poziv za sudjelovanje u istraživanju privatnim iznajmljivačima sa svog područja.

Konačno, dionici cikloturizma koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju su: iznajmljivači smještaja, iznajmljivači smještaja sa sadržajima prilagođenima cikloturistima te članovi

cycling tourism in the Istria County, i.e., what are the existing indicators of cycling tourism development in Istria County? and What do local stakeholders consider important for the successful further development of cycling tourism in Istria? The findings presented in the paper are part of the research conducted during 2020. For the research purposes, a questionnaire was devised, based on the European Tourist Indicator System questionnaire (ETIS, 2016) for tourists and visitors with the questions adapted to the research topic – cycling tourism. The questions on the local stakeholders' opinions on the effect of cycling tourism in the destination are adapted from the study by the authors Bull and Lovell (2007). The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 25 different dichotomous questions with multiple choices, closed and open-ended questions, and multiple sub questions. Although closed-ended questions result in standardised responses and faster data processing, open-ended questions have the potential to reveal new important factors that might be overlooked if the research relies solely on predefined answer options (Kalton and Schuman, 1982). Open-ended questions included in the questionnaire can lead to initial insights in areas lacking research (Singer and Couper, 2017) and was the motivation for using open-ended questions in this study.

It is worth noting that for the purpose of this paper, only a number of questions from the questionnaire were used. The online questionnaire was prepared in the Microsoft Office 365 programme and sent to local cycling tourism stakeholders in the Istria County by email. The list of the respondents' contacts was compiled using the list of specialised accommodation for cyclists in Istria – Istra Bike&Bed, available at the official Istra Bike website. In addition, the tourist boards from the Istria County area were asked to forward invitations for participation in the research to private renters from their area.

Finally, the cycling tourism stakeholders who took part in the research comprised: ac-

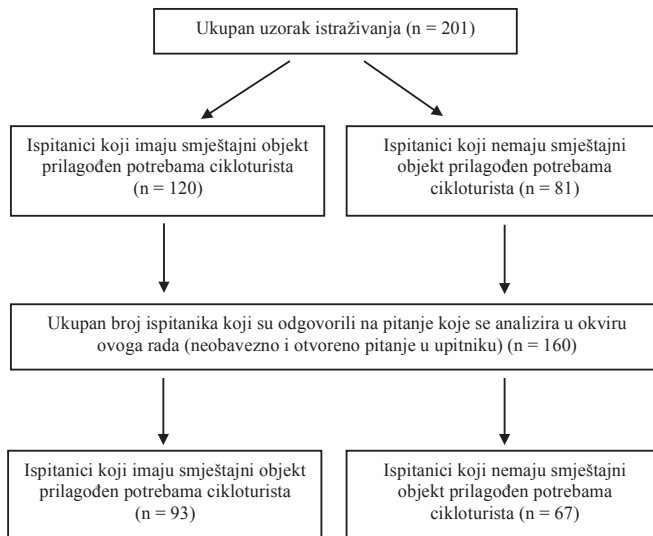
biciklističkih klubova i/ili biciklistički vođači. Navedeni dionici odabrani su kao ispitanici koji imaju praktično iskustvo stečeno prilikom poslovanja s cikloturistima te mogu identificirati ključne stavke budućeg razvoja cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji, a s obzirom na to da se radi o lokalnim dionicima, uključujući pritom karakteristike konkretne destinacije.

Istraživanje je trajalo od 7. travnja 2020. do 5. srpnja 2020. godine. Rezultati prikupljenih podataka pokazuju da je od ukupno 201 prikupljenog upitnika, 120 ispitanika imalo smještajne kapacitete prilagođene potrebama cikloturista, dok ih 81 nije imalo smještajne kapacitete prilagođene cikloturistima (Grafikon 1). S obzirom na to da je pitanje koje se odnosilo na prijedloge dionika o razvoju cikloturizma bilo opcionalno, odnosno nije bilo obavezno, na ovo pitanje odgovorilo je 160 dionika od ukupno 201 prikupljenog upitnika. Od odgovora dobivenih od lokalnih dionika cikloturizma koji imaju smještaj prilagođen cikloturistima, bilo je ukupno 93, dok je od lokalnih dionika koji nemaju smještaj prilagođen cikloturistima bilo njih 67.

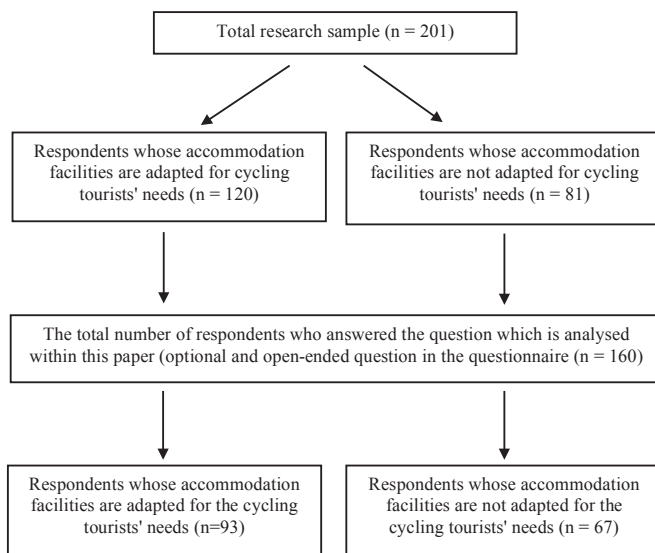
accommodation providers, renters of accommodation adapted for cyclists, and members of cycling clubs and/or cycling guides. These stakeholders were selected as respondents due to their practical experience gained from engaging with cycling tourists, which allowed them to identify key aspects for the future development of cycling tourism in Istria County. As local stakeholders, they can provide insights on the destination's specific characteristics.

The research was conducted between 7th April 2020 and 5th July 2020. The findings of the gathered data show that, of 201 collected questionnaires, 120 respondents had accommodation facilities adapted for cyclists, while 81 of them did not have such facilities (Graph 1). Given that the question referring to the stakeholders' recommendations concerning cycling tourism development was optional, i.e. was not compulsory, 160 stakeholders out of the total of 201 collected questionnaires answered this question. A total of 93 respondents – local stakeholders with accommodation facilities adapted for cyclists – answered this question and 67 of those whose accommodation facilities are not adapted for cyclists.

Grafički prikaz 1: Uzorak istraživanja



Izvor: Obrada autorica

Graph 1: Research sample

Source: Processed by the authors

Interpretacija rezultata započinje uvodnim prikazom mišljenja ispitanika o utjecaju cikloturizma na destinaciju. U radu su prezentirani rezultati jednog dijela istraživanja s obzirom na to da je ostatak istraživanja koji se temelji uglavnom na kvantitativnoj analizi podataka bio predmet drugog znanstvenog rada (Brščić *et al.*, 2021) u kojemu se iznose mišljenja lokalnih dionika ovisno o pitanjima vezanim uz utjecaj cikloturizma na destinaciju s aspekta lokalnog identiteta, kulture i tradicije te s aspekata kvalitete života u destinaciji, a koji se navode u nastavku. Rezultati analize u okviru ovog rada odnose se na prijedloge ispitanika o potrebnim aktivnostima za razvoj cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji, a analizirani su korištenjem refleksivne tematske analize. U analizi podataka korišten je računalni programski paket za kvalitativnu analizu podataka – NVIVO. Analizirani su odgovori na otvoreno pitanje koje glasi: „Molimo navedite Vaše sugestije za daljnji razvoj cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji“. Odgovori na pitanja kodirani su prema induktivnoj metodi. Svaki dio izjava

The interpretation of the findings begins with an introductory presentation of the respondents' opinions on the impact of cycling tourism in the destination. The paper deals with the findings of one part of the research given that the rest of the research that was based mainly on quantitative data analysis was the subject of another scientific paper (Brščić *et al.*, 2021) that presents the opinions of local stakeholders regarding the issues related to the impact of cycling tourism in the destination from the aspect of local identity, culture and tradition, and from the aspects of quality of life in the destination detailed below. The findings of the analysis presented in this paper relate to the respondents' proposals for the necessary activities to develop cycling tourism in the Istria County and they were analysed using reflective thematic analysis. The computer programme packet for qualitative analysis NVIVO was used in the data analysis. The answers to the following open-ended question were analysed: “Please state your suggestions for further development of cycling tourism in Istria County”.

kodiran je samo jednom. Kodiranje teksta bilo je tzv. *In Vivo* (Maher *et al.*, 2018), odnosno korišten je tekst ispitanika za izradu kodova, a kasnije su kodovi grupirani u kategorije, odnosno teme. Autori su kodirali tekst odvojeno, a kasnije su dogovorom došli do naziva i definiranja tema koristeći šest faza analitičkog procesa tematske analize: upoznavanje s podacima, kreiranje inicijalnih kodova, oblikovanje kategorija ili tema, pregledavanje mogućih tema, definiranje i imenovanje tema te predstavljanje rezultata (Byrne, 2022; Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

Dobiveni empirijski rezultati prikazani su deskriptivnom statistikom. Također, prikupljeni su sekundarni podaci iz različitih izvora, kao što su Hrvatska turistička zajednica, Turistička zajednica Istarske županije, e-Visitor, Istria Bike, Statista, UN Tourism, The World Bank Group i WTO (Svjetska trgovinska organizacija).

4. REZULTATI

4.1. Cikloturizam u Istarskoj županiji

Istarska županija najrazvijenija je turistička i cikloturistička regija u Republici Hrvatskoj (Ćucić *et al.*, 2024). U 2022. godini ostvareno je 27.690 noćenja (MINT, 2023). Tijekom 2023. godine zabilježeno je više noćenja, ukupno 28.121 (MINT, 2024). Glavna turistička sezona u Istarskoj županiji traje tijekom ljetnih mjeseci, odnosno najveći broj noćenja ostvaruje se u razdoblju od lipnja do rujna. Prema podacima koji su dostupni na destinacijskoj web stranici *Istra Bike*, u Istarskoj županiji je postojalo ukupno 165 biciklističkih staza (5.825,42 km) gledajući 2022. godinu. Tijekom 2023. godine broj biciklističkih staza smanjio se na 162, odnosno na 5.781,26 km. Prosječna duljina staze iznosi oko 35 km (Tablica 1).

The answers were coded according to the inductive method. Every part of the statements was coded only once. Text coding was the so-called *In Vivo* (Maher *et al.*, 2018), i.e., the respondents' texts were used for creating the codes grouped into categories, or topics. The text was coded separately to agree on the titles and definitions of the topics by using six phases of analytical process of analysing the topics: familiarisation with the data, generating codes, identifying the topics, reviewing the topics, defining the topics, and reporting the findings (Byrne, 2022; Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

The obtained empirical findings are illustrated using descriptive statistics. Furthermore, secondary data was collected from different sources, such as The Croatian National Tourist Board, The Istria County Tourist Board, e-Visitor, Istria Bike, Statista, UNWTO (The World Tourism Organisation), the World Bank Group and WTO (the World Trade Organisation).

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Cycling tourism in Istria County

The Istria County is the most developed tourist and cycling tourism region in the Republic of Croatia (Ćucić *et al.*, 2024). In 2022, 27,690 overnights were realised (MINT, 2023). During 2023, more overnights were recorded, i.e., 28,121 (MINT, 2024). The tourist season in Istria County peaks during the summer months, i.e., the highest number of overnights is realised in the period between June and September. According to the data available at *Istra Bike* website, the county had 165 cycling trails (5,825.42 km) in 2022 with the average length of approximately 35 km, but during 2023 the figures dropped to 162, i.e., 5,781.26 km. (Table 1).

Tablica 1: Ukupna duljina, ukupni broj i prosječna duljina biciklističkih staza (u km) u 2022. i 2023. godini u Istarskoj županiji

Istarska županija	Ukupna duljina staza (u km)	Ukupan broj staza	Prosječna duljina staze (u km)
2022.	5.825,42	165	35,31
2023.	5.781,26	162	35,69

Izvor: Obrada autorica prema Istra Bike

Prema vrsti podloge, najviše biciklističkih staza nalazi se u kategoriji MTB biciklističkih staza, zatim *trekking* staze, a potom asfaltirane staze (Istra Bike, 2024). Prema težini, najviše biciklističkih staza pripada kategoriji laganih, zatim kategoriji srednje teške, a potom teških staza. Također, dostupne su i brojne usluge vezane uz biciklizam, kao što su najam bicikala, usluga prijevoza bicikala/biciklista, servis bicikla, trgovine biciklističkom opremom i *Bike Friendly pointovi*. U Istarskoj županiji nalaze se i dva biciklistička parka. Prvi je otvoren na području Labin/Rabac – Bike Park Rabac s *pump track* poligonom, a drugi je otvoren 2022. godine na području Poreča – adrenalinski bike park, *pump track* Poreč. Također, dostupne su i e-Bike punionice na svim područjima u Istarskoj županiji; trenutno je postavljeno 27 punionica diljem županije. Bike Center Poreč otvoren je 2024. godine, a nalazi se na početnoj točki ove biciklističke staze. Ta staza nalazi se na ruti nekadašnje uskotračne željezničke pruge koja je povezivala Poreč i Trst, a sada je obnovljena i pretvorena u pješачko-biciklističku stazu (Bike Center Poreč, 2024).

Na tom području organizira se veći broj biciklističkih događanja tijekom proljetnih i jesenskih mjeseci, od kojih je najveći broj rekreativnog karaktera. S obzirom na to da su neki od biciklističkih događaja međunarodnog karaktera, oni predstavljaju dobar način za produženje turističke sezone. Ova-

Table 1: Total length, total number and average length of cycling trails (in km) in 2022 and 2023 in Istria County

Istria County	Total length of trails (in km)	Total number of trails (in km)	Average trail length (in km)
2022	5,825.42	165	35.31
2023	5,781.26	162	35.69

Source: Authors' processing according to Istra Bike

According to the type of surface, most cycling trails belong to the MTB category, followed by trekking and asphalt trails (Istra Bike, 2024). According to difficulty level, most cycling trails fall into the easy category, followed by moderate and challenging trails. Numerous services for cycling are also available, such as bike rental, service of bike/cyclists' transport, cycling equipment shops and *Bike Friendly* points. Istria County boasts two cycling parks: the first, *Bike Park Rabac* with a pump track, opened in the area of Labin/Rabac, and the second was adrenaline bike park *pump track Poreč* in the area of Poreč dating from 2022. Also available are e-Bike charging points in all areas of the Istria County. Currently, there are 27 such points throughout the County. Bike Centre Poreč was set up in 2024 and is situated at the starting point of the *Parenzana* cycling trail. *Parenzana* used to be a narrow-gauge railway connecting Poreč and Trieste, which has been restored and converted into a multi-use trail (Bike Centre Poreč, 2024).

A number of cycling events are organised in the area during the spring and autumn months, most of which are recreational. Given that some of those cycling events have international character, they represent an effective method of extending the tourist season. Such events play a substantial role in international tourism and for the destinations in which they are taking place. This makes them an important tourist product, especially if the said events are organised outside the

kvi događaji imaju značajnu ulogu u međunarodnom turizmu i za destinacije u kojima se održavaju. To ih čini značajnim turističkim proizvodom, osobito ako se organiziraju izvan glavne turističke sezone (Jackson, 2008). Moguće je zaključiti da su destinacije s dobrom cikloturističkom ponudom konkurentnije od drugih koje ju nemaju te da je cikloturizam u Istarskoj županiji prepoznat kao učinkovit način razvoja i produljenja turističke ponude izvan i poslije glavne turističke sezone.

4.2. Rezultati istraživanja

Kako je već prethodno navedeno, za dugoročnu održivost poslovanja potrebno je uzeti u obzir i perspektive dionika (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). U nastavku se navode mišljenja lokalnih dionika o budućem razvoju cikloturizma, a prvo su istaknuta njihova općenita stajališta o utjecaju cikloturizma na destinaciju. Socio-demografski profil ispitanika prikazan je u Tablici 2.

U istraživanju je sudjelovalo ukupno 103 muškarca (51,24 %) i 98 žena (48,76 %), pri čemu je najveći broj ispitanika (36,32 %) pripadao dobnoj skupini od 41 do 50 godina. Prema stupnju obrazovanja najviše je ispitanika bilo sa završenim diplomskim studijem (35,82 %) i srednjom školom (33,33 %).

main tourist season (Jackson, 2008). It can be concluded that the destinations offering developed cycling tourism have a competitive advantage in comparison to the destinations that do not, and that cycling tourism in the Istria County is recognised as an effective method of developing the tourist offer during off-season as well as to extend it.

4.2. Research findings

As previously stated, for long-term business viability, it is necessary to take into account the perspectives of stakeholders (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Subsequently the opinions of local stakeholders on the future development of cycling tourism are presented, beginning with their general views on the impact of cycling tourism in the destination. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

A total of 103 male (51.24 %) and 98 female (48.76 %) took part. The highest number of respondents (36.32 %) were in the age group between 41 and 50 years of age. Regarding the degree of education, most respondents completed diploma studies (35.82 %) or secondary school (33.33 %).

Tablica 2: Socio-demografski profil ispitanika

Spol	Udio (%)	Broj
Muški	51,24 %	103
Ženski	48,76 %	98
Dobna skupina	Udio (%)	Broj
18	0 %	0
18 - 30	7,46 %	15
31 - 40	21,89 %	44
41 - 50	36,32 %	73
51 - 60	21,89 %	44
61 - 70	11,44 %	23
> 70	1,00 %	2
Razina obrazovanja	Udio (%)	Broj
Osnovna škola	0,50 %	1
Srednja škola	33,33 %	67
Preddiplomski studij	20,90 %	42
Diplomski studij	35,82 %	72
Specijalistički / doktorski studij	9,45 %	19

Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Table 2: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Sex	Share (%)	Number
Male	51.24 %	103
Female	48.76 %	98
Age group	Share (%)	Number
18	0 %	0
18 - 30	7.46 %	15
31 - 40	21.89 %	44
41 - 50	36.32 %	73
51 - 60	21.89 %	44
61 - 70	11.44 %	23
> 70	1.00 %	2
Level of education	Share (%)	Number
Primary school	0.50 %	1
Secondary school	33.33 %	67
Undergraduate degree	20.90 %	42
Diploma degree	35.82 %	72
Specialist/doctoral degree	9.45 %	19

Source: research findings

Prema Brščić *et al.* (2021), mišljenje lokalnih dionika o utjecaju cikloturizma na lokalni identitet, kulturu i tradiciju uglavnom je pozitivno, odnosno ispitanici smatraju da cikloturizam ima povoljan učinak na destinaciju. Točnije, većina ispitanika (82,09 %) smatra da cikloturizam doprinosi poboljšanju destinacije, dok 11,94 % ispitanika smatra da pomaže u njezinu očuvanju u kontekstu utjecaja cikloturizma na lokalni identitet, kulturu i tradiciju. Samo nekoliko ispitanika (3,48 %) smatra da cikloturizam nema učinka, dok je 2,49 % ispitanika odabralo opciju „ostalo“ (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

Mišljenje lokalnih dionika o utjecaju cikloturizma na kvalitetu života također je pozitivno. Oni smatraju da cikloturizam najviše doprinosi poboljšanju destinacije u kontekstu kvalitete života (69,65 %) te kvalitete održavanja destinacije (16,92 %). Dio ispitanika (9,95 %) smatra da cikloturizam nema utjecaja na kvalitetu života, dok 0,50 % ispitanika smatra da je cikloturizam štetan.

According to Brščić *et al.* (2021), the local stakeholders' opinions regarding the impact of cycling tourism on the local identity, culture and tradition is mostly positive, i.e. they believe that cycling tourism has a positive impact on the destination. More precisely, the majority of the respondents (82.09 %) believe that cycling contributes to the improvement of the destination, while 11.94 % think that it facilitates its preservation in the context of its influencing the local identity, culture and tradition. Only a few respondents (3.48 %) believe that cycling tourism has no effect, while 2.49 % chose to answer "other" (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

The local stakeholders' opinions regarding the cycling tourism's impact on the quality of life is also positive. They believe that cycling tourism contributes most to improving the destinations in terms of quality of life (69.65 %) and the quality of destination maintenance (16.92 %). Some (9.95 %) believe that cycling tourism has no effect on

Opciju „ostalo” odabralo je 2,99 % ispitanika (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

U nastavku se navode prijedlozi dionika za budući razvoj cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji. Nakon analize rezultata i pregleda izjava navedenih u anketi, kreiran je *word cloud* kako bi se dobile informacije o najčešće korištenim pojmovima, odnosno riječima u izjavama ispitanika. Konačni *word cloud* izrađen je u tri faze filtriranja. Kriterij za izradu *word clouda* bio je odabir 100 najčešće korištenih riječi. Nakon toga, autori su isključili riječi poput veznika ili onih koje nisu imale posebnu važnost za temu, čime je nastao drugi *word cloud*. Proces je ponovljen još jednom te su identificirane konačne riječi koje su najčešće korištene u odgovorima na dva opisna pitanja. To su promocija, biciklističke, staze, Istra, bike, biciklističkih, zatim razvoj, održavanje cikloturizma/cikloturizam, ceste/a, infrastruktura, povezivanje, događanja, ulaganje i slično. Kombinacija navedenih pojmova u *word cloudu* u daljnjim analizama pokazat će se kao logična u konačnim rezultatima. Nakon analize podataka provedeno je kodiranje inicijalnih kodova. Slika 1 prikazuje klaster analizu inicijalnih kodova na temelju kriterija sličnosti riječi u izjavama ispitanika.

the quality of life, while 0.50 % state that cycling tourism is harmful and 2.99 % opted for “other” (Brščić *et al.*, 2021).

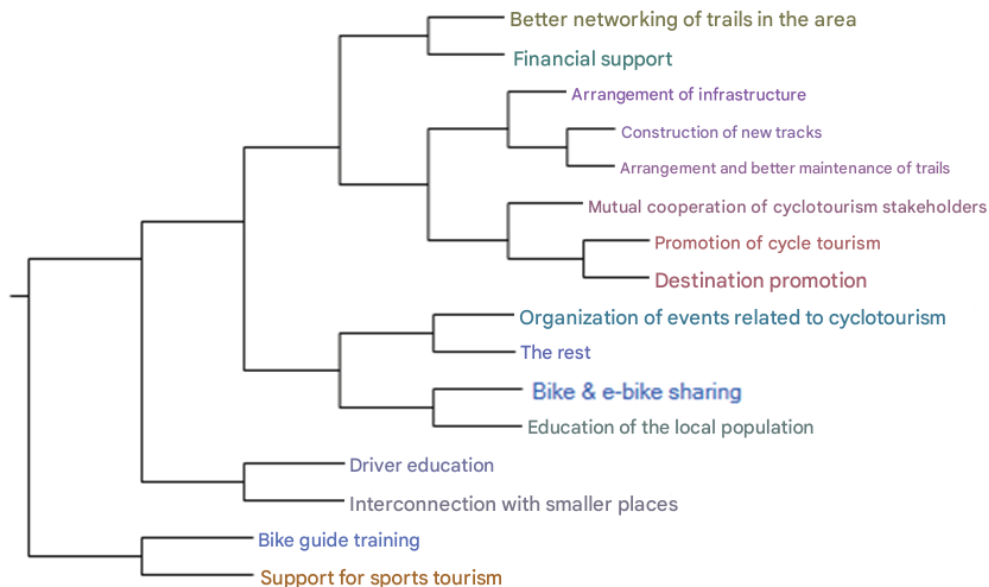
Hereafter are the proposals of stakeholders for the future development of cycling tourism in the Istria County. Following the analysis of the findings and a review of the statements from the survey, a word cloud was created to obtain information about the most frequently used terms, i.e. words in the respondents’ statements. The final word cloud was created through three filtering phases. The criterion for creating the word cloud was the choice of 100 most frequently used words. Then, the authors excluded the words like conjunctions or those unrelated to the topic yielding the second word cloud. The process was repeated to identify the most frequent words in the answers to the two descriptive questions: promotion, cycling trails, Istria, bike, cycling, development, maintenance of cycling tourism/cycling tourism, road/s, infrastructure, connecting, events, investment and similar. Combining the listed terms in the *word cloud* in further analyses proved logical in the results. After data analysis, coding of the initial codes was performed. Figure 1. shows the cluster analysis of the initial codes based on the criteria of similar words in the respondents’ statements.

Slika 1. Klaster analiza inicijalnih kodova, prema kriteriju sličnih riječi u izjavama ispitanika



Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 1: Cluster analysis of initial codes according to the criteria of similar words in respondents' statements



Source: research results

Nakon ponovnog pregleda inicijalnih kodova, formirane su tematske cjeline. U Tablici 3 prikazan je popis konačnih kodova i pripadajućih tema.

Tablica 3: Teme i kodovi kreirani temeljem analize izjava ispitanika

Nazivi tema i kodova	Broj kodiranih referenci iz izjava ispitanika
Infrastruktura	89
Izgradnja novih staza	41
Uređenje i bolje održavanje staza	29
Uređenje infrastrukture	19
Promocija	38
Promocija cikloturizma	24
Promocija destinacije	14
Suradnja	25
Međusobna suradnja dionika cikloturizma	16
Bolje umrežavanje staza na području	7
Međusobno povezivanje s manjim mjestima	2
Organizacija manifestacija vezanih uz cikloturizam	12
Edukacija dionika	10
Edukacija bike vodiča	1
Edukacija lokalnog stanovništva	5
Edukacija vozača	4
Koordinacija	7
Bike & e-bike sharing	3
Financijska potpora	3
Potpore sportskom turizmu	1
Ostalo	24

Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Prema provedenoj analizi, izjave su grupirane u šest tematskih cjelina: Infrastruktura, Promocija, Suradnja, Organizacija mani-

After the re-examination of the initial codes and thematic units, a list of final codes and the associated topics is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Topics and codes created on the basis of the respondents' statements analysis

Titles of topics and codes	Number of coded references from the respondents' statements
Infrastructure	89
Construction of new trails	41
Revitalisation and better maintenance of trails	29
Improvement of infrastructure	19
Promotion	38
Promotion of cycling tourism	24
Promotion of the destination	14
Cooperation	25
Cooperation among cycling tourism stakeholders	16
Better trail networking in the area	7
Interconnecting with small places	2
Organisation of events related to cycling tourism	12
Training of stakeholders	10
Training of cycling guides	1
Training of the local people	5
Training of drivers	4
Coordination	7
Bike & e-bike sharing	3
Financial support	3
Support to sports tourism	1
Other	24

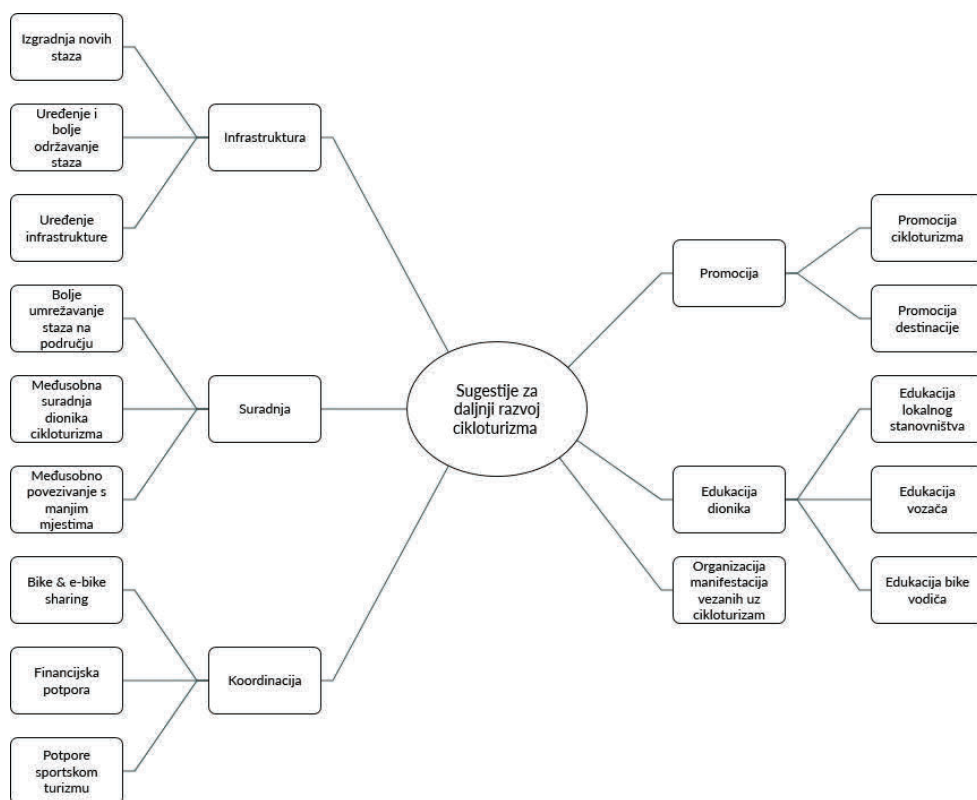
Source: research results

According to the conducted analysis, the statements are grouped into six topic units:

festacija vezanih uz cikloturizam, Edukacija dionika i Koordinacija. Posebnu kategoriju čini tema Ostalo, koja obuhvaća izjave za koje autori smatraju da nisu relevantne za svrstavanje u neku od prethodno navedenih tema, poput: „Nemamo uvjeta za cikloturizam i nisam razmišljala o tome“, „Strpljenje stanovništva i vozača spram biciklista“, „Uključit ćemo se u cikloturizam što više možemo“, „Samo tako dalje“, „Razmišljati kreativno“, „Na dobrom je putu“ i „Nemam sugestija“. Stoga tema Ostalo nije uključena u daljnju analizu. Slika 2 prikazuje mapu kreiranih tema i kodova.

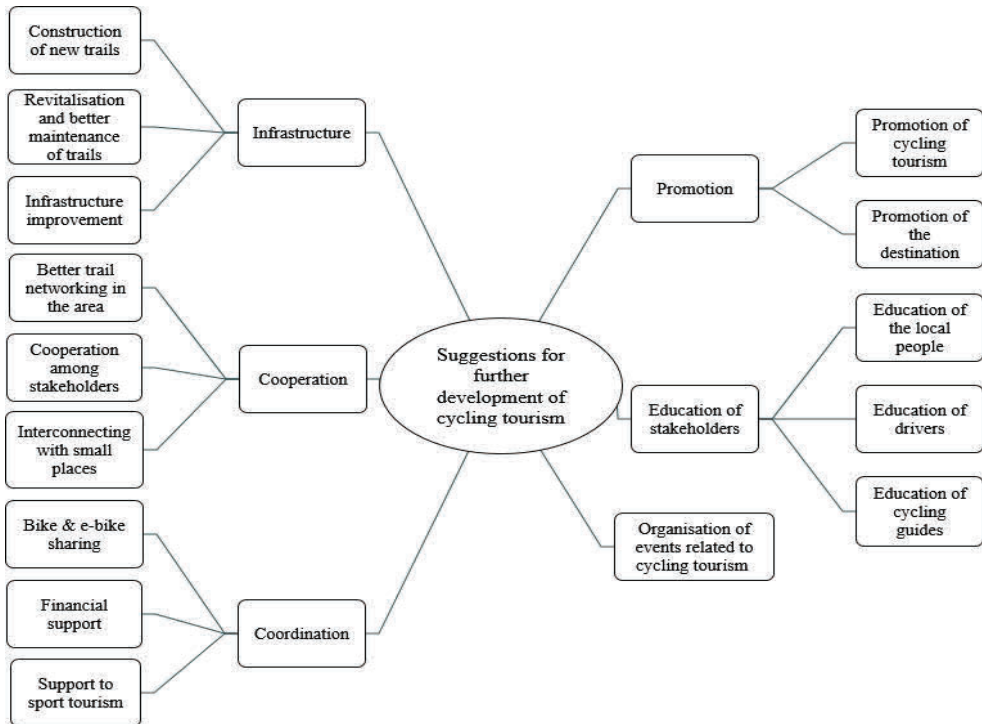
Infrastructure, Promotion, Cooperation, Organisation of events related to cycling tourism, Training of stakeholders, and Coordination. “Other” is a separate category which encompasses statements which are deemed unimportant by the authors to be put into one of the previously listed topics, such as: “We have no conditions for cycling tourism and I’ve not thought about it”, “Patience local population and drivers show towards cyclists”, “We’ll get involved in cycling tourism as much as we can”, “That’s the way to go”, “Think creatively”, “It’s on the right track” and “I haven’t got any suggestions”. This is why the topic “Other” has not been included in further analysis. A map of the created topics and codes is shown in Figure 2.

Slika 2: Sugestije ispitanika za daljnji razvoj cikloturizma



Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

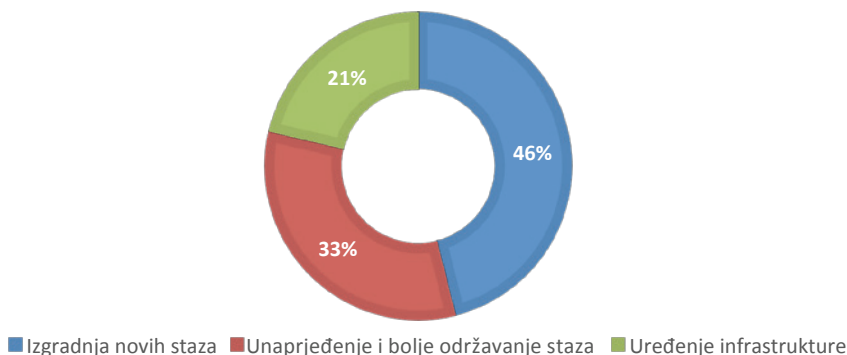
Figure 2: Respondents' suggestions for further development of cycling tourism



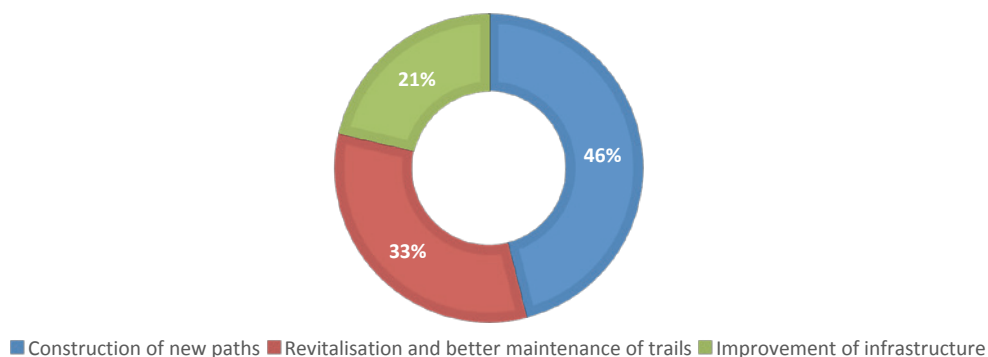
Source: research results

Od ukupnog broja kodiranih izjava, najveći broj grupiran je u temu Infrastruktura, s ukupno 89 referenci. Tema je oblikovana na temelju inicijalnih kodova: Izgradnja novih staza, Unaprjeđenje i bolje održavanje staza te Uređenje infrastrukture.

Of the total number of coded statements, the most were grouped around Infrastructure, totalling 89 references. The topic was shaped on the basis of the initial codes: Construction of new trails, Arrangement and better maintenance of trails, and Arrangement of infrastructure.

Slika 3: Tema Infrastruktura

Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 3: Infrastructure Topic

Source: research results

Najveći broj izjava ispitanika odnosio se na temu izgradnje novih staza, slijede izjave vezane uz uređenje i bolje održavanje staza te općenito uređenje infrastrukture. U nastavku se navodi nekoliko primjera izjava.

„Razvoj i izgradnja biciklističkih staza uz ceste za cestovni biciklizam, označavanje staza za MTB te stroga zabrana moto-kros motorima koji uništavaju puteve i staze što biciklističke, što planinarske.“

„Razvoj biciklističkih staza izvan prometnica. Cikloturizam je i rekreativan i

The highest number of statements from respondents related to building new trails, followed by statements related to the arrangement and better maintenance of trails and the general arrangement of infrastructure. Below are a few examples of statements.

“The development and construction of cycling trails along roads for cycling, marking of MTB trails and strict ban for motocross bikes which destroy roads and trails, both cycling and mountain.”

“Development of cycling trails outside roads. Cycling tourism is also recre-

treba gledati potrebe rekreativaca, a to su obitelji s djecom, parovi, društva prijatelja koji se ne natječu i ne žele biciklirati po prometnim cestama. Trebalo bi napraviti plan razvoja biciklističkih staza u sklopu plana saniranja prometnica... Biciklističke staze koriste prvenstveno lokalni ljudi, a onda i turisti. Potrebno je razvijati cikloturizam radi nas samih i onda radi cikloturista jer samo onda ćemo i mi sami moći promovirati cikloturizam.“

„Investiranje u obnovu postojećih staza, poboljšanje podloge, ulaganje u izradu novih biciklističkih staza kod opasnih dijelova cesta, povezivanje određenih mjesta radi produženja kilometraža, npr. obalno područje...“

„Planiranje i ulaganje u infrastrukturu te informiranje lokalnog stanovništva i suradnja s lokalnim biciklistima za bolji razvoj biciklističkih staza.“

Značajan broj ispitanika slaže se da je za razvoj cikloturizma u destinaciji ključno izgraditi biciklističke staze uz ceste, pritom povezujući susjedna mjesta. To može imati pozitivan učinak na lokalno stanovništvo i turiste, potičući ih na češće korištenje bicikla, a time i na smanjenje gužva na cestovnim prometnicama, posebice za vrijeme glavne turističke sezone. Osim infrastrukture, razvoj cikloturizma obuhvaća i označavanje biciklističkih staza, njihovo redovito održavanje te izgradnju dodatnih biciklističkih parkova i druge infrastrukture. Sve to doprinosi popularizaciji bicikla u destinaciji za različite svrhe.

Nakon Infrastrukture, najviše izjava ispitanika odnosilo se na temu Promocije. Ova tema formirana je grupiranjem dvaju izvornih kodova: Promocija cikloturizma i Promocija destinacije. U nastavku su prikazani primjeri izjava ispitanika.

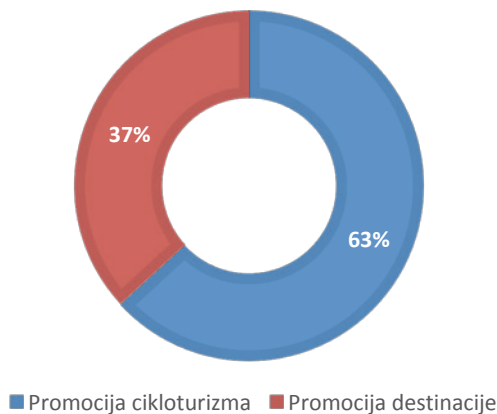
ational and the needs of recreationists should be taken into account, namely of families with children, couples, companies of friends who are not competing and do not wish to cycle along busy roads. A plan should be devised of the development of cycling trails within the plan of road improvement... Cycling trails are primarily used by the local people, and also by tourists. It is necessary to develop cycling tourism for our own benefit and then for the benefit of cycling tourists, as only in this way will we be able to promote cycling tourism.”

“Investment in renovation of the existing trails, improvement of the surface, investment in the construction of new trails by unsafe parts of the road, connecting certain places to extend the kilometrage, for example, the coastal area...”

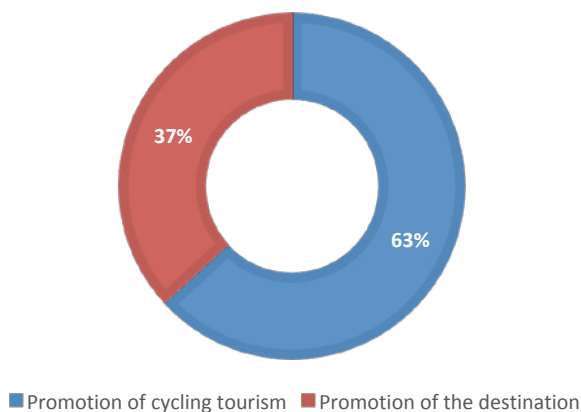
“Planning and investment in infrastructure, informing the local population, and cooperating with local cyclists for a better development of cycling trails.”

A considerable number of the respondents agree that development of cycling tourism in a destination requires building cycling trails along roads, while connecting the neighbouring places. This can have a positive impact on the local population and tourists, encouraging them to use their bikes more frequently and thus reducing traffic jams on roads, especially during the main tourist season. Apart from the infrastructure, the development of cycling tourism encompasses also the marking of cycling trails, their regular maintenance, and construction of additional cycling parks and other infrastructure. All this contributes to the promotion of bicycles for different purposes in destinations.

Following Infrastructure, most respondents' statements highlighted the topic of Promotion. This topic is formed by grouping two original codes: Promotion of cycling tourism and Promotion of the destination. The examples of the respondents' statements are below.

Slika 4: Tema Promocija

Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 4: Promotion Topic

Source: research results

Kao što se može vidjeti iz Slike 4, veći broj izjava kodiran u je podtemu Promocija cikloturizma. U nastavku se izdvaja nekoliko izjava ispitanika.

„Izrada jedinstvene platforme na kojoj će cikloturisti (domaći, strani) i lokalni zaljubljenici u biciklizam moći postavljati i skidati gpx tragove svojih tura Istrom, što bi bila dobra nadogradnja postojeće mreže biciklističkih staza.“

As can be seen from Figure 4, a large number of statements were coded under the sub-topic Promotion of Cycling Tourism. Below are a few statements from the respondents.

“Creation of a unique platform where cycling tourists (domestic and international) and local cycling enthusiasts will be able to post and download gpx tracks of their tours around Istria, which would be a good extension to the existing network of cycling trails.”

„Bolja promocija cikloturizma prema ciljanim skupinama uz prethodnu razradu svih mogućnosti koje imamo na terenu.“

„Promovirati Istru kao cikloturističku destinaciju.“

„Brendiranje Istre kao destinacije cikloturizma.“

Drugi najznačajniji aspekt razvoja cikloturizma u destinaciji je promocija cikloturizma kao sve popularnijeg oblika turizma, kako bi se što više ljudi, lokalnih stanovnika i turista, zainteresiralo za vožnju biciklom, pri čemu promociju treba usmjeriti prema svim dobnim skupinama. S druge strane, važna je i promocija destinacije kao odredišta koje podržava i nudi upravo taj oblik turizma.

Sljedeća tema nazvana je Suradnja i uključuje kodove: Međusobna suradnja dionika cikloturizma, Bolje umrežavanje staza na području i Međusobno povezivanje s manjim mjestima.

“Better promotion of cycling tourism aimed at target groups, with prior elaboration of all the possibilities which we have in the field.”

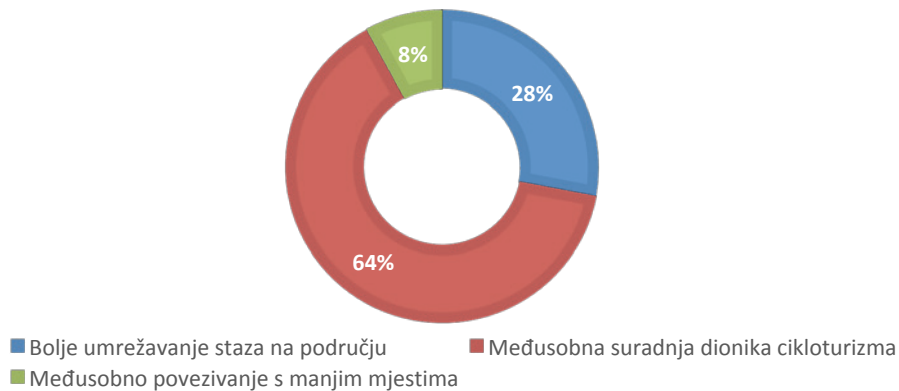
“Promote Istria as a cycling tourism destination.”

“Branding of Istria as a cycling tourism destination.”

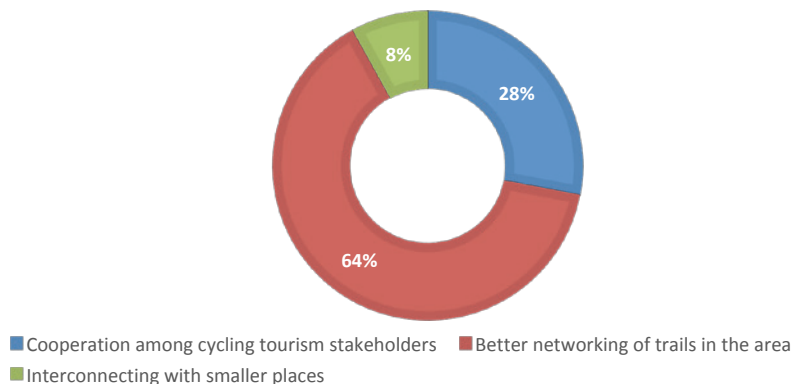
The next most important aspect of the development of cycling tourism in the destination is its promotion as an increasingly popular form of tourism in order to arouse interest in bike rides in as many as possible people, local population and tourists, while addressing all age groups. On the other hand, promotion of the destination is also important as the port of call that supports and offers that very form of tourism.

The following topic Cooperation includes the codes: Cooperation among cycling tourism stakeholders, Better networking of trails in the area, and Interconnecting with small places.

Slika 5: Tema Suradnja



Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 5: Cooperation Topic

Source: research results

Kao što se može vidjeti iz Slike 5, najviše izjava kodirano je u podtemu Međusobna suradnja dionika. U nastavku se navodi nekoliko izjava ispitanika.

„Stvoriti krugove u kojima se spajaju različiti aspekti teritorija (umjetnost, kultura, povijest i prirodne ljepote i gastronomija). Važne su jednostavne i jasne upute.“

„Veća povezanost postojećih biciklističkih staza između općina, stvaranje novih i sigurnih biciklističkih ruta koje bi spajale sjever i jug poluotoka kao i zapadnu i istočnu obalu Istre.“

„Povećanje kolnika te povezivanje s manjim mjestima.“

Tema Suradnja odnosi se na suradnju dionika iz različitih aspekata, odnosno na suradnju između dionika u procesu razvoja biciklističke infrastrukture, suradnju pri umrežavanju biciklističkih staza koje povezuju različite gradove i općine te suradnju koja će rezultirati razvojem cikloturističke infrastrukture, čime će se dodati vrijednost manjim i/ili manje naseljenim mjestima u destinaciji.

Izjave kodirane pod nazivom Organizacija manifestacija vezanih uz cikloturizam nisu grupirane niti u jednu kategoriju ili po-

As can be seen from Figure 5, most statements were coded under the sub-topic Stakeholder Collaboration. Below are a few statements from respondents.

“Create the circles in which different aspects of the territory (art, culture, history, natural beauty and gastronomy) join together. Clear and simple instructions are important.”

“Increased connection of the existing cycling trails between municipalities, creation of new and safe cycling routes which would connect north and south of the peninsula, as well as the west and east coast of Istria.”

“Increased number of pavements and connections with smaller places.”

The topic Cooperation relates to collaboration among the stakeholders from different aspects, i.e. among the stakeholders in the process of developing the cycling infrastructure and in networking of the cycling trails that connect towns and municipalities and will result in the development of cycling tourism culture infrastructure, which will add value to the smaller and/or less inhabited places in the destination.

The statements coded under the title of Organisation of events related to cycling

dtemu. U okviru ove teme, ispitanici su dali svoje prijedloge vezane uz organizaciju događanja, kao primjerice:

„Po mom mišljenju, bilo bi lijepo da se organizira cikloturizam kojim će se ostvariti veći broj noćenja, a ne samo jedno noćenje. Znači organizirati razna natjecanja ili nešto tome slično.“

„Potrebno je što više organizirati rekreativne biciklijade i amaterske utrke.“

Organizacija biciklističkih manifestacija, posebice međunarodnih, destinaciji donosi višestruke koristi, poput većeg broja noćenja, popularizacije destinacije među (ciklo) turistima, ostvarivanja većeg broja dolazaka izvan glavne turističke sezone i slično. Osim toga, može utjecati na veće zadovoljstvo lokalnog stanovništva koje želi sudjelovati u takvim događanjima.

Sljedeća tema je Edukacija dionika, a sastavljena je od kodova: Edukacija bike vodiča, Edukacija lokalnog stanovništva, Edukacija vozača. Primjeri izjava ispitanika navedeni su u nastavku.

tourism are not grouped in any category or sub-topic. Within this topic, the respondents offered their suggestions related to organising events, like:

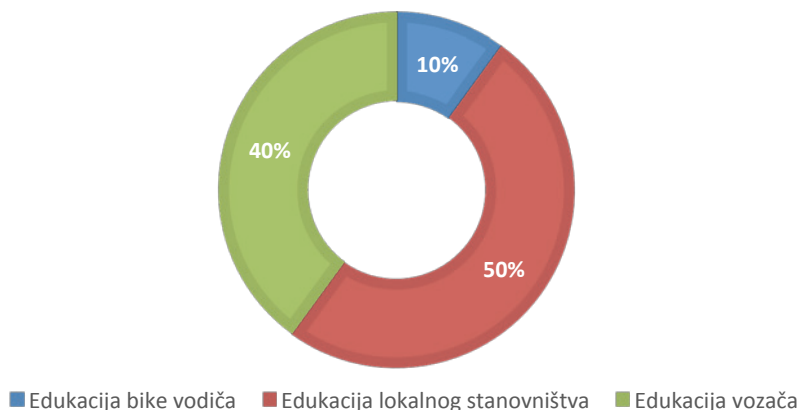
“In my opinion, it would be nice to organise cycling tourism that would contribute to realising a larger number of overnights, and not just one night. This implies organising various competitions or similar.”

“It is necessary to organise more recreational bike tours and amateur races.”

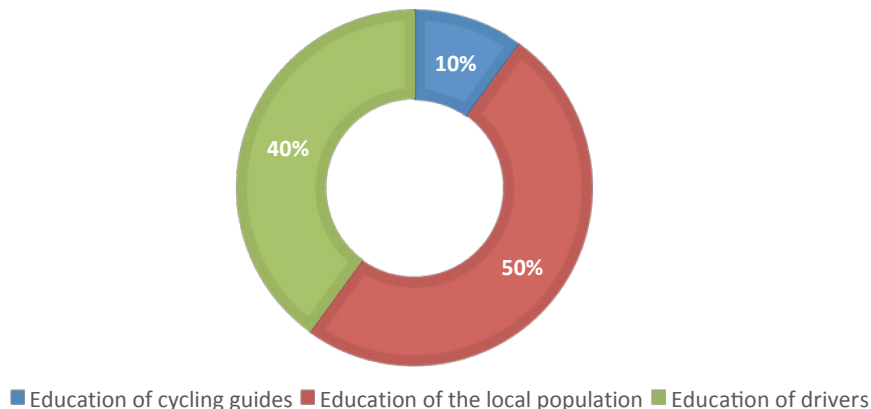
Organisation of cycling events, especially international ones, brings multiple benefits for the destinations, such as higher number of overnights, popularisation of the destination among (cycling) tourists, arrivals during the low season, etc. Additionally, it can provide greater satisfaction of the local population who wishes to participate in such events.

The next topic Training of stakeholders consists of the following codes: Training of cycling guides, Training of local population, and Training of drivers. The examples of the respondents' statements are listed here below.

Slika 6: Tema Edukacija dionika



Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 6: Training of Stakeholders Topic

Source: research results

Na Slici 6 vidi se da je većina izjava grupirana u podtemu Edukacija lokalnog stanovništva. U nastavku se navode primjeri izjava.

„Edukacije bike vodiča.“

„Krenuti od popularizacije biciklizma među lokalnim ljudima, to kasnije dovodi do toga da veći broj biciklista u svome gradu organizira manifestacije te vjerojatno održavaju staze po kojima oni sami voze. Treba biciklističkim klubovima dati novčanu potporu, ako im treba, kako bi radili s djecom i mladima, možda među nama ima talenata za taj sport.“

„Bolje upoznati vozače sa sigurnosnim mjerama kada su u pitanju biciklisti i bicikliste upozoriti o pravilima vožnje na glavnim cestama.“

Tema Edukacija dionika odnosi se na edukaciju biciklističkih vodiča, koji imaju značajnu ulogu u razvoju cikloturizma u destinaciji, s obzirom na to da su često poveznica između cikloturista i cikloturizma kao oblika turizma u destinaciji. Nadalje, edukacija može potaknuti zanimanje djece za biciklizam kao sport, a time i organizaciju raznih aktivnosti u destinaciji koje se tiču cikloturizma. S druge strane, važna je i edu-

Figure 6 shows that most of the statements are grouped into the subtopic Training of local population.

“Training of cycling guides.”

“Start with popularising cycling among local people; it leads more cyclists organising events in their towns, and likely maintaining the trails they ride. Cycling clubs should be given financial support, if they need it, in order to work with children and young people as, maybe, some of us are talented for this sport.”

“Better familiarise drivers with the safety measures when it comes to cyclists and warn the cyclists about the driving regulations on the main roads.”

The Training of stakeholders topic refers to training the cycling guides who play an important role in the development of cycling tourism in the destination, given that they are a frequent link between cycling tourists and cycling tourism, as a form of tourism, in the destination. Furthermore, training can stimulate children’s interest in cycling as sport, and thus boost organising cycling tourism-related activities in the destination. Conversely, motorist training is vital to fos-

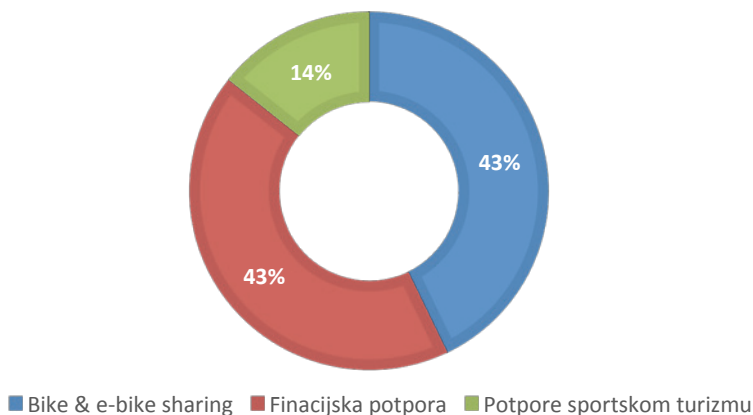
kacija vozača motornih vozila, kako njihovo ponašanje ne bi dovelo bicikliste u opasnost prilikom susreta na glavnim cestama.

Tema Koordinacija sastavljena je od kodiranih izjava grupiranih u kodove Bike & e-bike *sharing*, Financijska potpora i Potpore sportskom turizmu (Slika 7).

ter safe behaviour and prevent endangering cyclists on main roads

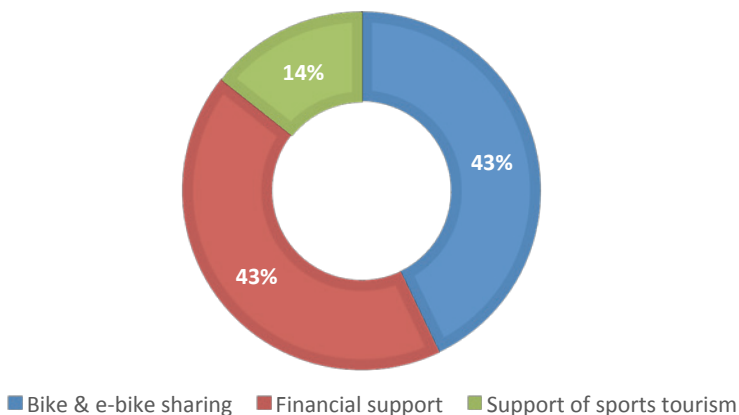
The Coordination topic is composed of coded statements grouped in the codes of Bike & e-bike sharing, Financial support and Support to sports tourism (Figure 7).

Slika 7: Tema Koordinacija



Izvor: rezultati istraživanja

Figure 7: Coordination Topic



Source: research results

Primjeri izjava za ovu temu navode se u nastavku:

„Bike & e-bike sharing na strateškim punktovima na stazama subvencioniran od strane turističkih zajednica i lokalnih uprava.“

„Više koordinacija i usmjeravanje javnih sredstava (javni pozivi) na razvoj cikloturizma.“

„Potpore sportskom turizmu.“

Ispitanici smatraju da je važno za razvoj cikloturizma koordinirati postavljanje Bike & e-bike *sharing* punktova u destinaciji. Naime, sve popularnije je korištenje električnih bicikala koji pružaju mogućnost vožnje bicikala većim skupinama ljudi nego obični bicikli, pa bi destinacije koje su u procesu razvoja cikloturizma svakako trebale uzeti u obzir taj trend. No, da bi to bilo ostvarivo u većem broju destinacija, potrebno je putem različitih fondova (nacionalnih, europskih, regionalnih i slično) omogućiti financijske potpore.

Identificirani prijedlozi mogu pridonijeti razvoju cikloturizma i u drugim destinacijama u kojima se cikloturizam razvija. Osim toga, značaj ovih prijedloga još je izraženiji s obzirom na to da dionici koji su sudjelovali u istraživanju unutar svog poslovanja imaju izravan kontakt s cikloturistima te su upoznati s njihovim željama i potrebama.

5. ZAKLJUČAK

U radu su analizirane sugestije lokalnih dionika privatnog sektora vezano uz budući razvoj cikloturizma. Naime, prema teoriji dionika važno je uključiti što veći broj dionika u upravljanje kojemu je cilj stvaranje veće vrijednosti te je važno uključiti i razumjeti dionike radi dugoročne održivosti poslovanja (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). Kao što je u radu više puta istaknuto, cikloturizam pridonosi održivom razvoju turističke destinacije, a za održivi razvoj cikloturizma u destinaciji važno je kod donošenja odluka uvažavati mišljenja lokalnih dionika. Ovaj rad pridonosi novim

Examples of statements regarding this topic are given below:

“Bike & e-bike sharing in strategic points along the trails, subsidised by tourist boards and local authorities.”

“More coordination and orientation of public funds (tenders) towards the development of cycling tourism.”

“Support for sports tourism.”

The respondents believe that coordination of installation of Bike & e-bike sharing points in the destination is important for the development of cycling tourism. Namely, the use of electric bikes is increasingly popular; they facilitate cycling for larger groups of people in comparison to ordinary bikes and the destinations in the process of the development cycling tourism should certainly consider this trend. However, to realise this in more destinations, it is necessary to ensure financial support from different funds (national, European, regional, etc.).

The identified proposals can contribute to the development of cycling tourism in other destinations where cycling tourism is developing. In addition, the significance of these proposals is even more apparent as the study's participants, who interact directly with cycling tourists through their businesses, are familiar with their wishes and needs.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper scrutinises the suggestions of local private sector stakeholders regarding the future development of cycling tourism. Namely, the stakeholder theory requires including as many stakeholders as possible in management to create greater value, and include and understand the stakeholders for long-term sustainability of business operation (Freeman *et al.*, 2020). As emphasised in the paper, cycling tourism contributes to sustainable development of a tourism destination, and sustainable development of cycling tourism in a destination requires

spoznajama u području održivog razvoja cikloturizma, koristeći pristup odozdo prema gore. U radu su prezentirani rezultati prikupljeni od strane dionika koji imaju različitu razinu iskustva vezano uz cikloturizam, a koji prema mišljenju autora imaju najveću razinu praktičnog iskustva u području cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji.

Razina iskustva ispitanika utvrđena je na temelju toga imaju li smještajni objekt prilagođen potrebama cikloturista ili nemaju. Iako je Istarska županija vodeća županija u Hrvatskoj s razvijenom cikloturističkom ponudom (Čučić *et al.*, 2024) rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da je za budući održiv razvoj i dalje nužno ulagati u infrastrukturu. Prema mišljenju ispitanika, glavni prijedlog razvoja cikloturizma odnosi se na infrastrukturu, odnosno na izgradnju novih staza, na uređenje i bolje održavanje staza te na uređenje postojeće infrastrukture. Različiti autori potvrdili su da je upravo infrastruktura glavna prepreka većem korištenju bicikala (De Sousa *et al.*, 2014; Wang, 2018), pa je evidentno da je ključna i za razvoj cikloturizma. Nakon infrastrukture, prema mišljenju ispitanika važno je promovirati cikloturizam, i to na način da se potiče veće korištenje bicikla od strane turista te da se potiče lokalno stanovništvo da više koriste bicikle.

Drugi aspekt promocije koji je istaknut jest promocija destinacije kao cikloturističke destinacije. Slično su zaključili i Gazzola *et al.* (2018), istaknuvši da je važno kreirati marketinške planove koji uključuju biciklizam. Ostale teme o kojima je važno voditi računa u budućem održivom razvoju cikloturizma su suradnja različitih dionika u destinaciji koji sudjeluju u kreiranju cikloturističkog proizvoda, zatim organizacija biciklističkih manifestacija koje ujedno doprinose promociji destinacije i potiču suradnju dionika. Edukacija je također prepoznata kao tema koju treba planirati. Edukacija treba biti usmjerena prema lokalnom stanovništvu, djeci, dionicima u cestovnom prometu te osposobljavanju biciklističkih

considering the opinions of local stakeholders in decision-making. This paper contributes to new insights in this field by using a bottom-up approach based on the findings collected from stakeholders with varying levels of experience in cycling tourism who, according to the authors, possess the most practical experience in cycling tourism in Istria County.

The respondents' level of experience was determined based on whether or not their accommodation facility is adapted to the needs of cycling tourists. Although Istria County is the leading county in Croatia with a developed cycling tourism offer (Čučić *et al.*, 2024), the research findings show that future sustainable development still requires investment in infrastructure. According to the respondents, the main proposals for the development of cycling tourism refers to infrastructure, i.e. the construction of new trails, the improvement and better maintenance of trails, and the improvement of existing infrastructure. Various authors have confirmed that infrastructure is the primary obstacle to increased bicycle use (De Sousa *et al.*, 2014; Wang, 2018), indicating that this is also crucial to the development of cycling tourism. After infrastructure, the respondents highlight the promotion of cycling tourism by encouraging greater use of bicycles by tourists and encouraging local residents to use bicycles more.

Another prominent aspect of promotion is the promotion of the destination itself as a cycling tourism destination. Gazzola *et al.* (2018) concluded similarly emphasizing that marketing plans should include cycling. Other vital topics for consideration in future sustainable development of cycling tourism are the cooperation of various stakeholders who participate in creating the cycling tourism product and the organisation of cycling events that contribute to the promotion of the destination and encourage cooperation among stakeholders. Training was also recognised as pending for planning. It should be directed towards the local population,

vodiča. Osim konkretnih smjernica za razvoj cikloturizma koje se mogu primijeniti u različitim destinacijama, identificirane teme mogu poslužiti kao okvir za kreiranje pokazatelja za daljnje praćenje razvoja cikloturizma. Rezultati istraživanja mogu poslužiti regionalnim i lokalnim donositeljima odluka koji su odgovorni za razvoj cikloturizma i kreiraju politike koje se odnose na održivi razvoj cikloturizma. Znanstveni doprinos rada ogleđa se u identificiranim područjima razvoja cikloturizma, korištenjem reflektivne tematske analize, koji mogu predstavljati bazu budućim istraživanjima, znanstvenim ili stručnim, s različitim dionicima. Identificirane kategorije pogodne su za istraživanje s javim sektorom, lokalnim stanovništvom i konačno s cikloturistima.

Treba istaknuti da je istraživanje provedeno u razdoblju *lockdowna* izazvanog pandemijom COVID-19, a upravo u tom razdoblju sportski turizam, a osobito cikloturizam (Tsitoura *et al.*, 2021), prepoznat je kao učinkoviti odgovor na izazove koje je nosila pandemija COVID-19 (Weed, 2020; Ciascai *et al.*, 2022). S obzirom na spoznaju da je turistički sustav vrlo podložan promjenama na tržištu, uspješnost turističke destinacije mjerit će se razinom uspješnog odgovora na izazove potencijalnih kriza. U tom kontekstu planiranje održivog razvoja cikloturizma može biti jedan od odgovora na određene vrste kriza.

Ograničenja i preporuke za buduća istraživanja

Treba uzeti u obzir da je istraživanje provedeno tijekom pandemije COVID-19 i to putem online ankete. U budućim istraživanjima bilo bi zanimljivo ponoviti istraživanje s lokalnim dionicima u cikloturizmu. Naime, moguće je da su dionici bili skloni promjeni mišljenja uslijed sveopće neizvjesnosti koja je u tom razdoblju vladala. Također, buduća istraživanja mogu se usmjeriti na pojedine teme identificirane u radu, posebice s dioni-

children, road traffic stakeholders and the training of cycling guides. In addition to the specific guidelines for the development of cycling tourism applicable in various destinations, the identified topics can serve as a framework for creating indicators for monitoring development of cycling tourism. The research findings are relevant to regional and local authorities who are tasked with fostering the development of cycling tourism and formulating policies for its sustainable growth. The scientific contribution lies in the identification of areas for cycling tourism development, utilising reflective thematic analyses, which can serve as a foundation for future research – both scientific and professional – engaging various stakeholders. The identified categories are suitable for research involving the public sector, local communities, and, ultimately, cyclists.

It should be stressed that the research was conducted during the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In that very period sports tourism, and particularly cycling tourism (Tsitoura *et al.*, 2021), was recognised as an efficient answer to the challenges of the pandemic (Weed, 2020; Ciascai *et al.*, 2022). With regard to the awareness of the tourism sector's susceptibility to market changes, the performance of a tourism destination is measured by the level of successful response to the challenges of potential crises. Hence, planning the sustainable development of cycling tourism is a possible response to certain crises.

Limitations and recommendation for future research

It should be taken into consideration that the research was conducted using an online survey during the COVID-19 pandemic. In future research it would be interesting to repeat the research with the local stakeholders in cycling tourism. Moreover, the stakeholders might have been inclined to change their opinions due to general uncertainty prevailing at the time. Moreover, future re-

cima javnog sektora (gradovima, općinama i turističkim zajednicama), kao i lokalnim stanovništvom. Cilj rada bio je prvenstveno utvrditi perspektivu razvoja cikloturizma u Istarskoj županiji na temelju mišljenja dionika iz privatnog sektora, što može ukazivati i na nedostatak istraživanja, no buduća istraživanja mogu uzeti u obzir potencijalne druge utjecaje cikloturizma u destinaciji s različitim dionicima.

Zahvala: Autorice zahvaljuju svim sudionicima istraživanja na doprinosu i recenzentima na konstruktivnim savjetima.

search could focus on specific topics identified in this study, particularly with the public sector stakeholders (municipalities, cities, and tourist boards), and with local communities. The purpose of the study was to determine the perspective on the development of cycling tourism in Istria County based on the opinions of private sector stakeholders, which may also indicate a gap in the existing research. However, future studies could consider other potential impacts of cycling tourism in the destination, engaging various stakeholders.

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