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DEVELOPING EVENTS TO REPOSITION TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Abstract:

In a globalised setting, the only way to differentiate Croatian destinations from others is by asserting the destinations' traditions, history, indigenous elements and cultural heritage. This paper synthesizes and builds upon the theoretical determinants of event tourism in developing and branding destinations, with practical implementation in the example of the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva". Based on the current-state analysis of the competitiveness of the Krk Fair and tourism in the Town of Krk, the paper defines development objectives and strategies to enable the event to evolve into the brand, symbol, synonym and identity of the destination based on a culture of learning and integration (synergy of local government and self-government, Tourist Boards, all stakeholders, and residents as drivers of entrepreneurship, together with the active involvement of tourists).

The study highlights opportunities and concrete activities in valorising and asserting historical and cultural heritage to bring together the destination's past and its tourism-related present and future to build a distinctive identity for the Town of Krk. The originality of the paper is the result of theoretical determinants, the opinions of the authors, and the results of surveying managers; as such it presents a starting point for future studies. The limitations of the study relate to the small sample of surveyed managers and to the fact that residents and tourists were not surveyed

Keywords:

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Introduction

Tourism of the twenty-first century is evolving into an industry of entertainment, events, experiences and activity holidays. Parallel with that, indigenous services/facilities, culture and tradition are making differentiation possible with regard to the global, uniform tourism offering. Indeed, events based on traditional values are becoming key motivations for tourist arrivals. They also help to improve the quality of life of local residents. It is crucial that event development is strategically managed based on proactively creating the future and synergistically involving all stakeholders and residents in order to enrich the offering and ensure sustainable development focused on nature, culture and the population.

The Krk Fair “Lovrečeva” in the Town of Krk is the destination’s most competitive event, capable of becoming the town’s identity and brand (situation and scenario analysis of the event), based on a culture that would foster the innovation and development of the offering and promotional activities to address the challenges of the dynamic tourism market.

Key issues of the research focus on how to valorise history and tradition in designing a competitive event geared to the preferences of modern tourists and based on indigenous elements to differentiate it from a globalised offering, how to enrich and improve the event offering on an annual basis to multiply attractions (and avoid the risk of repetitive events) and create new emotional value for tourists and residents alike, and how to transform an event into a trademark to help reposition a tourist destination.

Theoretical determinants of event tourism (Literature Review)

Events are growing into a key pull factor of a destination [1], [4]. Cultural events (event typology) provide the opportunity to present the local culture, tradition, indigenous values and value systems for the purpose of diversification in the market. In developing a tourist destination, cultural resources can be transformed into the leading product of the destination. A destination’s cultural heritage is what makes it different from other destinations [28]. Increasingly, modern tourists want to learn more about the tradition, value system and culture of local residents who increasingly identify with their tradition (a sense of belonging, local pride). In destinations, events represent a means for reinforcing the cohesion of a community and the communication among residents and are also seen as promoters of a destination in the tourism market [9], [21]. Events should not try to change or negate history and traditions in an effort to enhance market appeal. Although it is essential to make annual improvements and innovations to the offerings of repeat events, a line must be drawn to protect authenticity, indigenoussness and local culture (sustainable development of tourism events). The sustainable use of culture and all its forms, as a resource in a local community, prohibits its over-commercialisation; in turn, this implies the need of providing systematic education to the local community and raising awareness of the value of the tangible and intangible aspects of local culture [18]. Event tourism must be market-focused, its key economic goal should be to multiply profits (multiplier effect on the destination and stakeholders) and it cannot be based solely on financing through local government and self-

government. Cultural events can improve the quality of life in a city, provide more creative activities, increase the number of visitors, prolong the length of tourists' stays, create new partnerships and educational opportunities, lead to economic and social benefits, improve the image of the city as a tourist destination and help to achieve civic objectives [15], [16].

Urban tourism is becoming more and more based on the event offering. Cities have followed suit in recent years, using events for self-promotion, and as a result, events and festivals are increasingly recognized as valid tools for city branding and marketing [21]. Cities need to evolve into eventful cities and take a strategic, holistic view of their event portfolio in order to move from being cities full of events to developing eventfulness [21], [24]. Event portfolio is the strategic patterning of disparate but interrelated events taking place during the course of a year in a host community that as a whole is intended to achieve multiple outcomes through the implementation of joint event strategies [29]. Events should be developed based on strategic thinking using the portfolio, situation analysis (quantitative and qualitative analysis of the current state), scenario analysis (proposal of objectives and ways to innovate operational strategies), monitoring and control. Events that are planned to deliver specific outcomes and achieve clear goals set by a host city require a strategic managerial approach, where all the interested stakeholders align their goals and behaviour to a common strategy [7]. Market competition, a dynamic environment, the growth of competitors, and tourist requirements are putting in place a new paradigm of event competitiveness that has to be grounded in market research-based creativity and innovativeness, and stakeholder synergy (collaboration policy) to ensure

proactive and predictive action in generating new services/facilities. The offering has to be enriched, diversified, and developed; it needs to incorporate a package of events that reflects the primary theme, vision and content of events based on a culture of learning and knowledge, a culture focused on employees and volunteers as well as on visitors. Parallel to this, promotional activities should be undertaken to brand the event (the event's brand as the destination's brand) to attract tourists and create tourist loyalty and to ensure the self-actualisation of residents in ever-growing competition. The challenges of rethinking event development to reposition a destination are explored on the example of the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva" in the Town of Krk.

Methodology

With a view to innovating the development concept of the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva" and its influence on repositioning and branding the Town of Krk, in the applied part of this paper tourist destination managers and stakeholders in the Krk Fair (20 leading managers and small entrepreneurs in tourism, Krk Fair stakeholders, and representatives of local government and self-government and the Town of Krk Tourist Board) were interviewed in-depth and surveyed in February 2018. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions (seven open-ended and nine closed). The latter served for rating elements of the offering and for ranking attributes, and the former, for the situation and scenario analyses of the Krk Fair. The aim of the survey and interviews was to analyse the tourism competitiveness of the Town of Krk and the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva", define objectives, and identify ways to innovate operational strategies to improve events and rejuvenate and

reposition the Town of Krk. The results of the survey and interviews were compared with the results of a study conducted in 2017 (analysis of the tourism competitiveness of the Town of Krk, development concept of cultural and creative tourism in the Town of Krk, the development of audio management and its role in repositioning tourism in the Town of Krk). The attitudes of managers and stakeholders are starting points in analysing the current situation and presenting proposals for concrete activities and ways of managing development and bringing together stakeholders to facilitate the creation of emotional values and ensure the excellence of events and tourism of the Town of Krk.

Situation analysis of tourism of the Town of Krk

The situation analysis of tourism of the Town of Krk is based on quantitative and qualitative indicators of the current state of the town's tourism industry. Quantitative indicators point to growth in supply (in 2017, the town had 13,250 beds in its accommodation facilities) as well as growth in demand (number of tourists and overnights).

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of overnights	811,576	956,818	1,055,540	1,406,426	1,622,802
Number of arrivals	138,207	162,507	180,203	206,878	227,499

Table 1: Trends in tourist arrivals and overnights in the Town of Krk

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Qualitative analysis includes descriptions and rating of elements of the offering, SWOT analysis, benchmarking and the Qualitest. The following elements are characteristic of Krk:

- Natural preconditions - beaches (12 beaches with amenities/facilities and 32, without), the seabed, Košljun Islet, century-old olive groves
- Cultural resources - town walls, old town core, sacred monuments (the Cathedral of Krk, Franciscan monastery), archaeological findings (Roman mosaics and inscriptions, Roman baths, the Temple of Venus), the Frankopan Castle, the Museum of St. Quirinus, the "Leut" Archaeological Collection
- Sports facilities - 300 km of sign-posted and well-maintained hiking and biking trails, three themed walkways, six tennis courts, a football field and stadium, sports hall, beach volleyball, water skiing and wakeboarding, diving

- Entertainment - cocktail bars, cafés
- Events - the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva", Krk's Sails, the Krk Bike Story, the Krk Food Festival, Greetings to Summer, Story of the Galley, First of May Incubator Festival, Fig Festival, Drobznica Festival, folk festivities, A Gift for St. Quirinus, performances by harmony-singing groups, folklore groups, and cultural and performing societies.

The Town of Krk has been improving its offering across all levels (accommodation, catering, special-interest tourism, events). Although the quality of the town's offering sets it apart from competitor destinations, efforts in developing the offering have not succeeded in prolonging the season to any significant extent, which is seen as a primary disadvantage. The results of development up-to-date can be illustrated by comparing the findings of two surveys that explored how managers perceive

the competitiveness of tourism of the Town of Krk. According to the study conducted in February 2017 (in which 46 tourism managers and providers of the creative offering were surveyed), the average score of the overall tourism offering of Krk Island was 3.875 (on a scale of 1 to 5). The main motivation for travelling to the destination was sun-and-sea, that is, summer leisure tourism. New forms of the offering - outdoors offering, cultural offering, creative offering and event offering - are becoming increasingly important [25].

Results of the February 2018 survey (on a sample of 20 managers) show that the average score of the tourism offering of the Town of Krk is 4.125 (on a scale of 1 to 5), while the average score of tourist events is considerably lower, 3.20. The most competitive forms of the offering are: cultural tourism (heritage tourism), tourism based on summer vacations (sea, sun, sand), event tourism, sport tourism, creative tourism and eco-tourism.

Development problems include the lack of a comprehensive vision of development and the inefficiency of the institutional framework which is incapable of instigating collaboration between stakeholders in the Town of Krk and Krk Island (the two destinations compete with each other instead of seeking to create an integrated product at the island level through cooperation). Some stakeholders are large, financially or otherwise, powerful enterprises (for example, Valamar) that tend to follow their own vision of development and whose interests cannot be easily aligned with those of the local community or other stakeholders (small stakeholders, in particular).

Notwithstanding the identified problems, the Town of Krk Tourist Board won the 2016 Tourism Prism Award for achieving new quality in tourism, for its innovative and original way of presenting heritage

and for designing creative tourism products by combining tradition and modernity (for example, the Krk Fair “Lovrečeva” and The Whisper of Seashells). A precondition to development is the definition of a target segment in which a distinctive product should be developed to rejuvenate the destination and reposition it on the tourism market.

Competitiveness analysis of the Krk Fair “Lovrečeva”

The Krk Fair “Lovrečeva” is the most competitive and best recognised event in the Town of Krk and on Krk Island. The 494th fair of tradition, culture, gastronomy, entertainment and Frankopan heritage will be held on 8-10 August 2018. The event is named after St. Lawrence (Sv. Lovro), one of the island’s two patron saints. The event valorises the traditions of merchants of Antiquity, the Middle-ages and the Renaissance as well as the traditions of the Frankopans, and it delves into history to create a unique experience for present and future tourists (performances by Krk knights, archers, merchants, minstrels and jesters). It presents cultural heritage (the castle - kaštel, cathedral) and gives locations such as Kramplin Square, the main square Vela Placa, the water front (Gradska Riva) and jetty (Veli Mul) new meaning and new appearances. The event promotes the identity of Krk as a competitive cultural destination and demonstrates all of the island’s special features (one example is its folklore culture, fostered by 22 amateur folklore societies that are active in preserving traditional two-part singing and instrument playing, known as “na tanko i debelo”, which is on the UNESCO list of protected intangible world heritage) . Workshops (wool felting, for example) are organised as well as a medieval parade, a medieval costumed musical programme, a dried-

ham hand-slicing contest, and concerts (for example, concerts during the 2017 Krk Fair included performances by Damir Kedžo, Cubismo and Parni Valjak). There are more than a hundred participants in the event, with products being sold at some 50 stands. Lasting three days, the Krk Fair attracts about 10,000 visitors per day (Town of Krk Tourist Board).

The managers surveyed gave the Krk Fair offering a score of 3.89 (higher than the score of the overall event offering). The importance of the fair in enhancing the distinctiveness and branding of the Town of Krk received an average score of 4.56 (considerably higher than the score of the Krk Fair offering). The elements of the Krk Fair offering were ranked by attractiveness (1 - most attractive element, 8 - least attractive element) as follows: heritage fair, concerts, medieval-themed events, dried-ham hand-slicing contest, folklore, workshops, tournaments and fencing. The identified problems in developing the Krk Fair were ranked as follows: poor involvement and interest on the part of stakeholders, conflicts of interest between

stakeholders and communication issues, low level of stakeholder creativity and innovativeness, limited financial resources, failure to recognise new trends in event tourism, a lack of systematic support to development, and inefficient management and leadership. The quality of managing the fair was given a score of 4. The average scores for the involvement and efficiency of the destination's stakeholders in developing the Krk Fair offering are as follows: Town of Krk Tourist Board, 4.4; supply providers, 3.6; local government and self-government, 3.5; small entrepreneurs in hospitality and tourism, 3.2; associations, 3.2; residents, 2.7; and the Krk Island Tourist Board, 2.1. The Town of Krk Tourist Board scored considerably higher than any other stakeholder. The largest problem identified is the insufficient involvement of residents who should act as promoters of local culture and tradition and evolve into drivers of small entrepreneurship in tourism. The total score for cooperation among Krk Fair stakeholders was 3.3.

SWOT analysis can be used to present the current state.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Cultural, monumental and historical heritage	Poor cooperation and lack of interest among stakeholders
Medieval traditions	Poor focus on target segment
Well-developed and differentiated offering	Lack of an integrated product
Brand	Failure to connect with other elements of the offering
Location	Insufficient financial resources
Intangible musical heritage under UNESCO protection	Inadequate involvement on part of residents
Gastronomy	Focus on seasonal tourism
Long tradition in tourism	Poor connections with other micro destinations on Krk Island
Employees	Poor strategic event management
Volunteers and enthusiasts	Overcrowding
The bond between heritage, tradition and tourism	
Indigenous services/facilities	
Natural preconditions	

Opportunities	Threats
Growing awareness of historical heritage and traditions	Activities of competitors
Desire of tourists to learn about cultural and historical heritage	Failure to recognise new tourist preferences
Diversification of motivations for tourist arrivals	Adverse macroeconomic effects
Recognition of cultural, creative and event tourism	Dependence on weather conditions
Entry of groups (Valamar)	Institutional and administrative conditions
Connecting with other events	Legislative regulations that fail to foster small and mid-size entrepreneurship

Table 2. SWOT analysis of the Krk Fair “Lovrečeva”

To marshal strengths and overcome weaknesses, changes will need to be recognised as opportunities, in future development. Preconditions to this are strategic event management and the integration of all stakeholders.

Scenario of development of the Krk Fair “Lovrečeva”

The scenario of development is based on setting objectives and devising operational strategies, and it establishes the importance of strategic change management in creating competitive advantage through innovation. The development of the event and offering must follow the vision of tourism development of the Town of Krk that sees the town as a tranquil and laid-back destination of family activity holidays in the Kvarner region. The town proudly presents its natural and historical heritage to tourists as a unique blend of natural beauty and century-long tradition in sustainable development, enabling the guests to identify with the local environment and absorb its harmony [26]. The quantitative objective of the supply-side of the Krk Fair is to increase the number of stakeholders, supply providers and facilities/services. The quantitative objective of demand is to improve

financial performance (revenue and profit) through increased visitor spending (the emphasis is on attracting more-affluent visitors rather than on increasing the number of visitors). The qualitative objectives are to gain the leading position as the most attractive event in the Kvarner region, based on tradition and entertainment opportunities, and to effectively brand the event and destination. To accomplish these objectives it is essential to synergistically innovate operational strategies:

- Research and Development - The task is to identify problems, the level of visitor expectations and satisfaction and the level of competitor activities (by introducing CRM and Business Intelligence). All elements must be constantly assessed to ensure the continuous improvement of the event [27]. Visitors should be given an opportunity to co-create the event and innovate the programme. Proactive marketing should be used to attract visitors and stay ahead of the competition.
- Marketing strategy - Innovations to the marketing strategy - segmentation, positioning and the marketing mix - should be made based on marketing research. The target segments of the future are cultural tourists, creative tourists, families with children and young tourists (with the Krk Fair being the primary travel motivation or a secondary full factor) as well as residents. The Krk

Fair needs to be repositioned as a highly competitive event, geared to the tourists of the present and future. Innovations should be made to all elements of the marketing mix but especially to the product and promotion. Financial resources need to be invested in improving the promotional mix (advertisements, publicity, sales promotion, public relations) and promotional messages to ensure the best performance (greater revenue than costs). Specialised channels should be employed to focus promotion on the target segment (side-by-side promotion of the Town of Krk and the Krk Fair, with the Frankopan knights of Krk as the brand). It is recommended to ensure the greater involvement of the media (by organising a contest between media teams in slicing dried-ham). Use should be made of bloggers, incentive visits by journalists and travel agencies, and promotional films. The key to modern promotion is the Internet, and the active management of social networks and platforms and the active integration of online and offline channels to differentiate the event from events of competitors [22]. The best promoters are satisfied visitors, participants and residents (who post positive reviews). Events can become key promotional and communication tools of towns and cities [9]. An example of successful promotion is the soundtrack of the film “Lovrečeva u Krku” (“The Krk Fair”), which is being used in many marketing presentations (radio jingles, television appearances, presentations, announcements, etc.) and serves as an audio signature of the Tourist Boards of the Town of Krk and Krk Island. The Krk Fair must evolve into the synonym and brand of the Town of Krk and Krk Island [12]. Effective repositioning means that the target tourists have developed positive and favourable perceptions of the altered

product offerings and are satisfied with service delivery [30].

- Offering strategy - Key issues are how to be innovative and improve the offering relative to previous years and similar events, how to enhance the attractiveness of the event, how to design auxiliary events (events package) and how to tie the event offering with the other elements of the destination offering. To improve the event offering and adjust it to the target segment, it is necessary to promote a specific food and wine offering; organise a variety of different events (medieval music, literary evenings, art workshops, educational workshops); make innovations to the offering focused on families with children; introduce animation; foster creative tourism; organise a variety of workshops about old crafts, customs and local culture; develop the souvenir offering; ensure the involvement of craftsmen, small entrepreneurs, and family-run farms; and improve the presentation of native culture and traditions. The events offering could be supplemented with creative contents, such as enabling the participation of tourists in local events; introducing tourists to local customs; designing computer games based on the island’s heritage; and organising Glagolitic alphabet classes, folk dance classes, palm braiding workshops, clay souvenir workshops, fencing workshops for children, magician workshops, sash weaving workshops, local dialect workshops, Glagolitic workshops and local gastronomy workshops. The events offering should provide more entertainment and concerts for residents and should be adjusted to financial resources and target segments. It is also important to include the audio offering (presentation of local music, preventing audio pollution and noise) in developing the events offering. The Krk Fair needs to be synergistically linked with the other tourism

offerings of Krk Island to form an integrated destination product.

- Human resource strategy - People and the knowledge they possess are a key resource in innovating the event. Hence, managers must become knowledge-based visionaries and leaders and effectively manage events, employees and volunteers. It is crucial to ensure permanent training and improvement for employees and motivate them to achieve self-actualisation through the success of the event. Key to developing event excellence is the attitude of employees and volunteers towards visitors (how they respond to complaints; their full dedication to visitors, etc.)

- Financial strategy - In achieving visitor satisfaction and repositioning the destination, major issues involve how to obtain new sources of capital, how to attract entrepreneurs and sponsors, and how to achieve a positive multiplier effect on tourism and the economy.

In event innovation, it is essential to ensure strategic management and leadership based on synergy and the active participation of all stakeholders as well as tourists to achieve excellence [17], [20]. There should be consensus on the kind of tourism to be developed in the community, and the responsibility for actions should be equally distributed [19]. To develop the Krk Fair it is vital to implement the entrepreneurial initiatives of residents with creative elements of the offering [5]. It is also important to generate creative ideas by confronting the attitudes and opinions of all stakeholders to gain competitive advantages. Creativity and collaboration are considered essential sources of innovation in tourism [28]. New value should result from internal marketing and stakeholder motivation in event development [3]. The key to collaboration is awareness that the

achievement of common goals will guarantee the accomplishment of individual ones. A culture of integration based on the transfer and exchange of knowledge, a new business culture focused on employees and visitors, and a culture of innovativeness should drive the growth and development of the Krk Fair and help in repositioning and branding the tourism industry of the Town of Krk. The Krk Fair should become a symbol of the competitiveness of the Town of Krk as a destination of events and experiences. To this end, it is necessary to continuously make innovations to the concept-of-development model based on a critical analysis of the current situation and the identification of objectives and concrete ways of innovating operational strategies to address the challenges in the dynamic tourism market.

Conclusion

Events are becoming more and more important in generating competitive advantages for a destination. While the offerings of repeat events need to be enriched every year, no attempts should be made to change or falsify the destination's culture and traditions. The offering should seek to reconcile the differing interests of tourists (culture and tradition) and residents (entertainment and concerts).

The Krk Fair "Lovrečeva" is the most attractive event in the Town of Krk as well as on Krk Island. The event does not try to re-create history but rather it emphasises the combination of tradition and modernity as the backbone of the Town of Krk's tourism brand. The results of the research pertaining to the survey of managers indicate that the score given to the offering of the Krk Fair "Lovrečeva" is lower than the overall score of the

destination and that the event fails to fully valorise the opportunities provided by local tradition. The key is to design a new offering (a culture-based and creative offering anchored in indigenous services, facilities, entertainment and animation) that is based on market research, current state analysis and active creation of the future and is adjusted to the target segment and encourages the development of promotional activities (innovation of the promotional mix, offline and online presentations, the involvement of bloggers, and the organisation of incentive visits), proportional to the efficient valorisation of human and financial resources, to ensure the rejuvenation of the destination and enhance its distinctiveness in the market. To create new value for visitors and gain a leading position in the tradition-based offering of the Kvarner region, a well thought-out response based on innovative solutions will need to be formulated. Efforts must be made to actively involve not only residents as promoters of local culture and drivers of small entrepreneurship, who should identify with the Krk Fair “Lovrečeva”, but also tourists as co-creators of the offering. Priority is given to strategic development management, based on the synergy of all stakeholders, local government and self-government, tourist boards, associations and residents, in creating and transferring new knowledge and ideas and generating excellence and experiences for visitors. The Krk Fair should evolve into a must-see event (and the primary travel motivation of increasingly discerning tourists) and become the brand, identity and symbol of the Town of Krk (and vice versa) because it unveils the town’s cultural identity as well as its past, present and future and embraces modern tourism of the twenty-first century. The Town of Krk should be repositioned as a town of cultural events (the importance of the

Krk Fair “Lovrečeva” in the perception of Krk in the minds of potential tourists) and unique experiences, with a rich cultural and tradition-based offering.

The limitations of the study relate to the small sample of surveyed managers and to the fact that residents and tourists were not surveyed. The study represents a starting point for future research of the role indigenous events, based on local culture and tradition, in repositioning Croatian tourist destinations.

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