

COASTAL TOURISM RESORT DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GALVESTON, TEXAS, USA AND OPATIJA, CROATIA

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper provides a comparative analysis of two coastal tourism resorts: Galveston, Texas, USA and Opatija, Croatia. Both destinations have a history of tourism but have also experienced numerous challenges and setbacks, including war, natural disasters, and economic crisis. Over time, these destinations have been able to respond to their challenges and enter a phase of rejuvenation in the Tourism Area Life Cycle. In the case of Galveston, tourism development began in the late nineteenth century, as the city became a center for international trade. However, it has faced many challenges since that time. The first major challenge came in the year 1900, when the city was hit by a hurricane and became the site of the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Galveston re-developed itself as a major tourism destination in the 1920s. This period of development was based on gambling, but by the 1950s, illegal casinos were shut down. From the 1990s, the resort saw a new period of rejuvenation based on its historical and beach resources. In 2008, Galveston was once again hit by a devastating hurricane. Investment in reconstruction and new development has been hindered by the global economic crisis. In the case of Opatija, tourism development began in the mid-nineteenth century with new infrastructural development, such as a railway that connected Rijeka with Vienna and luxurious villas that housed the Austro-Hungarian nobility. The outbreak of World War I disrupted tourism for a time. Following the conclusion of the war, Opatija became an Italian city, and the resort entered a period of stagnation. However, following the conclusion of World War II, the resort experienced a period of rejuvenation with new Yugoslav development in hotels and marinas. Finally, the Homeland War in Croatia once again disrupted tourism. Presently, the resort seeks to avoid stagnation with investment in redeveloping the aging infrastructure, but this, too, has been hindered by the global economic crisis.

Design/methodology/approach – In this paper, we will use a Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) approach to analysis. We will consider the historical development of tourism in each Galveston and Opatija, the challenges faced by the resorts, and the responses that have allowed them to enter a phase of rejuvenation instead of stagnation or decline. We will then use this framework to consider the present challenge that these two destinations face given the ongoing economic crisis.

Findings – This paper demonstrates the resilience of these two coastal tourism resorts in light of the challenges that they have faced. In particular, both destinations' recovery from recent events has been hindered by the current global economic crisis. We will discuss how the destinations are responding to these issues and consider the implications for future tourism development.

Originality/Contribution – This paper is distinct in its method of comparison. Galveston and Opatija are coastal resorts on different continents, yet they have and continue to face similar challenges. We would like to consider how these two disparate resorts are responding to the present challenge of the ongoing global economic crisis with the aim of reproducing the solutions from one destination in the other.

Keywords Galveston, Opatija, coastal resorts, tourism development, Tourism Area Life Cycle

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