ASSESSMENT OF DESTINATION'S TOURISM OFFERING IN THE OFF-SEASON

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Abstract
Purpose – This paper presents tourist attitudes regarding the off-season tourism offering of Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera, a seaside destination hosting about 2.2 million overnight stays per year. Since more than 54% of these stays are concentrated in the summer season, the destination is facing an issue of high seasonality. Therefore, an active approach is required that would result in higher tourist satisfaction in the off-season and bring about seasonality smoothing. Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to examine tourist perceptions of the tourism offering in the off-season with an emphasis on identifying the critical destination attributes that need to be improved. In that context, creative approach in creating tourism offering should be taken in terms of more appealing and innovative but still authentic tourism products.
Design – A tourist on-site survey was conducted from January to May 2016. The assessment was carried out on a sample of 358 tourists who visited this destination.
Methodology – Descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the socioeconomic, demographic and travel-related characteristic variables to obtain frequencies. T-test was performed to find out whether there are any significant differences between importance and satisfaction levels for each of the 22 attributes. IPA was performed to identify the critical performance factors that need to be addressed.
Findings – T- test results confirmed that the majority of attributes of the destination offering (19 out of 22 attributes) have statistically significant negative gap scores indicating that satisfaction with those attributes is less than their importance to the respondents. IPA analysis produced fairly clear implications for management in the case of Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera in the off-season.
Originality of the research – In this field of research, the novelty lies in investigating satisfaction with a variety of attributes of Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera's offering during the off-season.
Keywords tourist satisfaction, tourism offering, off-season, IPA

INTRODUCTION

The Mediterranean Basin is characterized by high seasonality of tourism demand and seasonal variations in climatic and bathing characteristics, where an intense competition between 3S (sun, sea, sand) mass-oriented destinations is present (Nemec Rudež et al., 2014). Some 14.3 million tourists visited the Republic of Croatia in 2015, with foreign tourist arrivals accounting for 88.4% and domestic tourists for 11.6% of arrivals (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In 2015, as compared to 2014, arrivals increased by 9.3% and overnights by 7.7%. Croatia is facing high seasonality issues, due to the fact that the majority of arrivals occur during summer. In 2015, 63.5% of total arrivals occurred from June to the end of August; 17.1%, from January to the end

of May; and 19.4%, from September to December (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). For tourist destinations, seasonality leads to many negative economic effects in terms of the difficult identification of the optimal level of investment as regards the size of tourism structures (a problem of the long-run); the higher level of volatility (and risk) in economic performance (which is higher the shorter the length of the "peak-season"); as well as the overload in terms of social and environmental carrying capacity of the destination (Figini and Vici, 2012). As Kozak and Rimmington (2000) pointed out, destinations can put different marketing policies into effect to reduce seasonality, such as market diversification (e.g., attracting retired senior citizens who have enough time to spend for holidays) and price verification (e.g., reducing prices of goods and services at the destination as well as tour prices). However, the starting point in this study is the attitudes towards the tourism offering of the tourists visiting a traditionally sun and sea destination, Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera, during the off-season. The primary purpose of this study was to examine tourist perceptions of the tourism offering in the off-season. The relationship between the importance of various attributes and features in the destination and the perceptions of the current conditions of the attributes was tested. The results were evaluated using Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), a technique that represents a very useful diagnostic tool for destination managers, who can use it to identify current problems with tourist experiences and then assign priorities to measures that are designed to improve those experiences (Griffin and Edwards, 2012). As stated by Kozak and Rimmington (2000), a number of research studies have investigated tourist satisfaction with mass tourism destinations, particularly during the peak (summer) season. However, there has been limited investigation of tourist satisfaction with off-season holiday destinations. This study, therefore, provides an insight into tourist attitudes towards the tourism offering in the off-season, with an emphasis on identifying the critical destination attributes that need to be improved by prioritizing scarce-resource allocation. Creative approach in creating tourism offering is recognised as one of the directions that should be taken in the future product development of this region. As Stipanović and Rudan (2014) underlined, these destination could become a creative through active tourists' participations in the specialised, educational and recreational programs, workshops, authentic gastronomy, heritage and events.

1.   LITERATURE REVIEW - TOURIST SATISFACTION

According to Antón et al. (2014), satisfaction is a post-purchase evaluation made by consumers concerning their experience with the product, and emerges from comparing the latter with previous expectations. Chi and Qu (2008) define it as the result of customers' assessment of perceived quality. Tourists form their judgment of a destination by comparing their actual experiences with their expectations and they are satisfied if performance exceeds expectations, or dissatisfied when expectations are not met (McDowall, 2010). Chan et al. (2015) reveal that there are three broad categories of satisfaction in the tourism domain: satisfaction with the tour service and experience, satisfaction with the destination, and satisfaction with the tourism experience (Alegre and Garau, 2011; Chi and Qu, 2008; Lee et al. 2011). Customer satisfaction has always been considered an essential business goal since it was assumed that satisfied customers would buy more (Chi and Qu, 2008). Tourists' assessment of the quality of

services affects their actions and satisfaction, which affects the likelihood of their returning to the destination again or recommending it to others (McDowall, 2010). Lee et al. (2004) stated that service quality and satisfaction have been critical concepts in the fields of recreation and tourism, as well as in marketing, because they may be used as indicators of profitability and the successful achievement of organizational objectives. In addition, many researchers have found that a high level of satisfaction leads to greater customer loyalty to certain services and/or products (Bernini and Cagnone, 2012; Marcussen, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2010; Yoon and Uysal, 2005) and that consumer satisfaction, by increasing loyalty, helps to secure future income (Anderson et al., 1997). Furthermore, in recent years satisfaction has begun to be used in studies that aim to explain tourism expenditure (Cárdenas-García et al., 2016). Some authors found that more satisfied tourists tend to spend more (Chen and Chang 2012; Craggs and Schofield, 2009; Kim et al., 2010; Smolčić Jurdana and Soldić Frleta, 2016; Zhang et al., 2010), while the results of Wang and Davidson's (2010) research indicate that satisfaction with a trip is not significantly associated with total tourist spending. Nevertheless, no solid conclusions can be made in this regard since only few studies have attempted to investigate the impact of satisfaction on tourist expenditure.

Understanding what tourists expect from a destination and the features that are regarded as important to the quality of their experience can provide a good information base for destination managers (Griffin and Edwards, 2012). As Bernini and Cagnone (2012) emphasised, the attribute-level conceptualisation is particularly attractive for the analysis of the overall tourist satisfaction with the destination. It can be stated that overall satisfaction with a destination is the result of tourists' perceptions of different attributes of the destination (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Alegre and Garau, 2010; Chi and Qu, 2008; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Therefore it is necessary to continuously conduct researches that involve tourist satisfaction with different destination attributes. Kozak and Rimmington (2000) indicate that tourist satisfaction with a destination, rather than with a facility, might create repeat visits. Hence, it is important that destination management ensure overall quality and diversity of the destination's tourism offering that is directed to the needs of tourists. In order to do so, managers need to understand how tourists perceive their current experiences, particularly features of the destination that might be currently detracting from the quality of experience (Griffin and Edwards, 2012). IPA is found to be an effective tool for use in identifying critical parts of services that remain to be improved (Sethna, 1982; Griffin and Edwards, 2012). Originally designed for marketing purposes (Griffin and Edwards, 2012), IPA has proven to be a broadly applicable tool which is relatively easy to administer and interpret, resulting in extensive use among researchers and managers in various fields (Frauman and Banks, 2011). IPA recognizes satisfaction as the function of two components: the importance of a product or service to a client and the performance of a business or agency in providing that service or product (Martilla and James, 1977). The combined tourist ratings for those two components then provide an overall view of satisfaction, with clear directives for management on where to focus (very often scarce) resources (Frauman and Banks, 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

The sampling frame of this study consisted of tourists who stayed in Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera during the winter and spring of 2016. A tourist on-site survey was carried out from 1 January to 31 May 2016. Research assistants approached the tourists in different places and at different times and asked them to complete a questionnaire. All questionnaires were collected immediately after completion in the presence of the research assistants. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, and 358 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, giving an effective response rate of 89.5%.

The stratified sampling method was used to select a sample, using four dimensions of tourist arrivals in destinations. The first dimension is the period of the visit. The number of tourist arrivals increased from month to month, with the lowest number of arrivals occurring in January. The number of respondents that stayed in the destination in January accounted for 8% of the sample. The number of respondents that stayed in February represented 11% of the total sample, while those staying in March, April and May accounted for 17%, 28% and 36%, respectively. The second dimension is the destination where respondents were staying: 30% of the respondents were accommodated in Rijeka and 70%, in Opatija. The third dimension is tourist origin, with foreign tourists and Croatian nationals accounting for 66% and 34% of arrivals, respectively. For those three dimensions, population data were drawn from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics. The fourth dimension is the type of accommodation: tourists who stayed in hotels accounted for 53% of the total sample, those staying in private apartments and with friends and relatives represented 22% and 12%, respectively, while those staying in camps and hostels accounted for 3% and 10%, respectively, of the total sample. For this dimension, population data were drawn from the Tourism Boards of Rijeka and Opatija.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The first part was related to the tourists' attitudes (importance and satisfaction level) towards 22 elements of the tourism offering. As destinations are complex systems there are many influences on the quality of the tourist experience and on whether satisfaction is achieved (Lee et al., 2010). Previous studies have indicated that each destination has different attributes and the traditional satisfaction scales cannot be used across destinations (Lee, 2015). Therefore, drawing upon previous work in the relevant field, an attribute list consisting of 22 items was established by the authors. As Bruhn and Grund (2000) indicate, the measurement of complex constructs, such as satisfaction, with only one indicator (single-item approach) does not ensure optimal results. Hence, the authors recommend measuring satisfaction with a multi-item approach because this leads to better results. Accordingly, in this study, respondents were asked to rate their level of importance and satisfaction with 22 different elements of the tourism offering (measured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being "strongly dissatisfied" and 5 being "strongly satisfied"). The second part of the questionnaire collected respondents' socio-economic information. The objective of the third section was to obtain information about the characteristics of their stay in the destination. This part included items such as the length of stay, party size, accommodation type, motivation and the intention to return

or recommend it as a destination to other tourists. The last part of the questionnaire collected data on respondents' expenditure in the destination.

The collected data were analysed using the statistical package SPSS for Windows 23.0. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, paired sample T-test and Importance–Performance Analysis (IPA). Descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the socioeconomic, demographic and travel-related characteristic variables to obtain frequencies. T-test was performed to find out whether there are any significant differences between importance and satisfaction levels for each of the 22 attributes. Finally, Importance-Performance Analysis was performed to identify the critical performance factors that need to be addressed in order to make the off-season tourism offering more appealing to tourists.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The distributions of the respondents' demographic and socio-economic characteristics are described in Table 1. As regards the region of origin, 64.5% of respondents were foreigners (among which, 18% came from Italy, 17% from Germany, and 15% from Slovenia) and 34.6% were Croats. Males accounted for 50.3% of the sample and females for 49.7% (Table 1).

Table 1: **Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the sample (N = 358)**

Characteristic	%	Characteristic	%
Gender		**Monthly family income**	
Male	50.3	Up to 500 €	5.6
Female	49.7	501 – 1,000 €	16.2
Age		1,001 – 1,500 €	19.6
18 − 25	16.2	1,501 – 2,000 €	22.1
26 − 35	26.0	2,001 – 2,500 €	14.0
36 − 45	24.6	2,501 – 3,000 €	10.6
46 − 55	19.0	3,001 – 3,500 €	6.1
56 − 65	9.5	3,500 € and more	5.9
66 and over	4.7	**Country of origin**	
Educational level		Domestic	34.6
Elementary school	0.6	Foreign	65.4
High school	32.7		
College	29.9		
University degree	36.0		
Other	0.8		

Source: Authors

Demographic characteristics also revealed that 41.7% of respondents had a monthly family income between 1001 € and 2000 €, 50.6% were aged between 26 and 45, and 36% held a university degree (Table 1).

As outlined in Table 2, the majority of respondents stayed in a hotel (52.9%) and private apartments (22.5%). Furthermore, 34.4% of the respondents opted for half-board, while 31.1% used only accommodation services without meals included. It was revealed that 45.5% of respondents were on their first visit, 28.5% had visited this destination two or three times, and 26.0% had visited four times or more. These figures demonstrate that repeat business seems to be important for the tourism in Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera in the off-season.

Table 2: **Main characteristics of the trip and stay (N = 358)**

Characteristic	%	Characteristic	%
Accommodation		**Traveling**	
Hotel	52.9	alone	13.4
Camp	2.9	with partner	34.4
Private apartments	22.5	with family members +children	24.0
Friends and relatives	12.1	with family members (no children)	6.4
Hostel	9.6	with friends/ acquaintances	19.0
Accommodation service		with associates	2.8
Full board	12.6	**Trip organisation**	
Half board	34.4	Individually organised	74.9
Bed and breakfast	22.1	Package tour	25.1
Only overnight stay	31.0	**Motives***	
Number of visit		Rest and relaxation	24.1
First visit	45.5	Fun	12.7
Repeat visit	54.5	New experiences	12.4
Length of stay		The beauty of the nature and landscape	12.2
1-3 days	30.7	Gastronomy	8.8
4-7 days	55.6	Cultural content	5.6
7 days and more	13.7	Visiting relatives/ friends	4.3
Mode of transportation		Wellness	4.2
Car	61.5	Sport and recreation	4.1
Bus	29.3	Business	3.5
Plane	1.1	Shopping	3.4
Train	0.3	Health reasons	3.4
Motorbike	7.3	Other	1.3
Ship	0.6		

Note: *multiple choice question
Source: Authors

As Table 2 demonstrates, the car was the most important means of transportation (61.5%), followed by the bus (29.3%). Fully 74.95% of the sample self-organized their trip, 25.1% let a travel agency or tour operator organize it for them, and more than 83% travelled with friends or relatives (Table 2). The main motivation for visiting was rest and relaxation, followed by fun and new experiences. The results also showed that on average respondents stayed in the destination for 5.8 days.

Table 3: **Respondents' average expenditure (N = 358)**

Total expenditure during whole stay/person (mean)	439.1 €
Total daily expenditure/person (mean)	83.9 €
Expenditure on accommodation (%)	47
Expenditure on food and beverages (%)	21
Expenditure on entertainment and culture (%)	8
Expenditure on sports and recreation (%)	2
Expenditure on shopping (%)	13
Expenditure on excursions (%)	5
Expenditure on other products and services (%)	4

Source: Authors

The expenditure examined in this study included only purchases within the destination, hence traveling costs to and from the destination are not covered by this research. The results revealed that the average daily expenditure per person was 83.9€ (Table 3), higher than the results obtained in previous researches on tourist expenditure in this destination. The results of a research conducted by Smolčić Jurdana and Soldić Frleta (2016) in the same destination show that during the 2014 summer season the average daily expenditure per person was 77.8€, while the total expenditure during the whole stay per person was higher (451.5€) than in the present study. This could be explained with a fact that these destinations have put efforts in enhancement of their offering during the off-season in the last couple of years. Just like those visiting Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera during the summer, respondents who visited this destination during the winter and spring spent most of their tourism budget on accommodation (47%) and on food and beverages (21%), followed by shopping (13%). In the destination, respondents spent 8% of their budget on entertainment and culture, and only 2% on sport and recreation. Although the expenditure is increasing over the years, its structure remains the same (high portion refers to expenditures on accommodation, food and beverages). Expenditures on other products and services are still moderate. This indicates the need for more innovative and appealing offering of other facilities that would result with higher tourist engagement.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

An important finding relates to the future intentions of the respondents. Only 9.8% of the respondents explicitly excluded future visits to Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera. In addition, 94.1% of the sample plans to recommend this destination to others. These results could indicate that the respondents are satisfied with their stay in this area during the off-season, since previous studies reveal that customer loyalty is influenced by customer satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2004; Yoon and Uysal, 2005). In addition, the mean rate of the respondents' overall satisfaction with the destination was 3.9 (on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being 'strongly dissatisfied' and 5 being 'strongly satisfied'), confirming previous results. Nevertheless, in order to get detailed insight into the attitudes of tourists towards the destination offering, the respondents were asked to rate their importance and satisfaction level with 22 different destination attributes. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was performed to test the reliability

and internal consistency of each of the attributes measured. The importance and satisfaction scales were found to be reliable (alpha = 0.87 and 0.85, respectively), suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. These alphas exceeded the minimum standard (0.80) suggested by Nunnally (1978) as well as (0.70) suggested by Baggio and Klobas (2011), hence they are considered acceptable as an indication of reliability.

For most individual attributes, respondents expressed an average or high degree of satisfaction. Out of 22 attributes, respondents rated eight as "very satisfied". According to the obtained mean scores, respondents were most satisfied with *the beauty of nature* and *the feeling of personal safety and security* (average satisfaction rate is 4.3 for both), followed by *cordiality of employees in tourism* (4.2), *preserved environment*, *friendly and hospitable residents*, and *quality of accommodation and catering facilities* (4.1 each). At the same time, the least satisfactory elements for the respondents were *facilities for children* (average satisfaction rate was 3.3), *the offering of sports facilities* and *the quality of local transport* (both 3.4) and *entertainment opportunities* (3.5).

With regard to importance ratings, respondents considered *the feeling of personal safety and security*, and *cordiality of employees in tourism* (mean importance ratings were 4.6 for both), followed by *the beauty of nature*, *cleanliness of the destination* and *value for money* (4.5 each) to be the most important attributes for them. An interesting fact is that those are the same attributes with which respondents are most satisfied (Table 4).

Gap analysis shows the difference between how important attributes are to respondents and how satisfied they are with those attributes. After the mean importance and mean satisfaction scores are calculated for all of the 22 attributes, the mean importance score for each attribute is subtracted from the respective mean satisfaction score. The resulting difference represents the gap score.

Table 4: **Results of Paired Samples T-test**

Attributes	Mean		Gap score	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Satisf.	Impor.				
The beauty of nature and landscapes	4.3	4.5	-.112	-2.786	356	.006
Preserved environment	4.1	4.4	-.302	-6.361	357	.000
Cleanliness of the destination	4.0	4.5	-.461	-9.226	357	.000
Equipment and maintenance of the beaches	3.6	4.2	-.603	-11.129	357	.000
Friendly and hospitable residents	4.1	4.4	-.293	-5.915	357	.000
Cordiality of employees in tourism	4.2	4.6	-.347	-7.666	356	.000
Feeling of personal safety and security	4.3	4.6	-.254	-5.917	357	.000
Quality of information on the destination's website	3.8	4.2	-.355	-7.580	357	.000
Availability of information in the destination	3.9	4.3	-.425	-9.047	357	.000
Clearly signposted tourist directions in the destination	3.8	4.1	-.277	-5.349	357	.000

Attributes	Mean		Gap score	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Satisf.	Impor.				
Transportation links	3.9	4.3	-.425	-7.772	357	.000
Quality of local transport	3.4	4.1	-.690	-10.873	357	.000
Cultural and historic heritage	3.9	4.0	-.089	-1.812	357	.071
Quality of accommodation facilities	4.1	4.4	-.282	-5.724	357	.000
Quality of catering facilities	4.1	4.3	-.246	-5.157	357	.000
Diversity of cultural events	3.6	3.9	-.324	-5.571	357	.000
Facilities for children	3.3	3.2	.095	1.367	357	.172
Entertainment opportunities	3.5	4.0	-.542	-8.890	357	.000
Sports facilities	3.4	3.5	-.103	-1.660	357	.098
Excursion offering	3.6	3.8	-.263	-4.279	357	.000
Shopping opportunities	3.7	4.0	-.302	-4.885	357	.000
Value for money	3.9	4.5	-.651	-13.921	357	.000

Note: Mean values range from 1 (extremely unsatisfied/ unimportant) to 5 (extremely satisfied/ important).
Source: Authors

Gap scores can be positive or negative. As Levenburg and Magal (2004) stated, a positive gap indicates that the respondents' satisfaction with a certain attribute is higher than the corresponding importance they associate with that attribute. A negative gap indicates that satisfaction with a certain attribute is less than its importance (Levenburg and Magal, 2004). The results of the paired samples T-test presented in Table 3 indicate that only for three attributes (*facilities for children*, *cultural and historic heritage*, and *sports facilities*) out of 22 there is no significant statistical difference between the importance and satisfaction means. In addition, the results confirmed that all 19 statistically significant gap scores are negative. The highest negative gap score was found for the following attributes: *quality of local transport*, *value for money*, *equipment and maintenance of the beaches*, and *entertainment opportunities* (ranging from -0.54 to -0.69). These attributes have turned out to be critical for the destination since they are not performing well but, at the same time, are very important to tourists. On the other hand, *a feeling of personal safety and security*, *quality of catering facilities*, and *the beauty of nature and landscapes* had the smallest negative gap score (ranging from -0.11 to 0.25). Managers are advised to focus on the attributes with the largest negative gap that is statistically significant since those attributes are not performing well but are very important to tourists.

After identifying the importance and the satisfaction with each one of the attributes, an importance-performance grid was created. IPA has been used in hospitality and tourism research for years (Blešić et al., 2014). This matrix is used to suggest attributes for improvement and to guide the formation of strategies. The Y-axis shows the respondents' perceived importance of specific attributes (degree of care), while the X-axis reflects the attributes' performance (degree of satisfaction). The four quadrants are as follows: *Concentrate here*, *Keep up the good work*, *Low priority* and *Possible overkill*. According to (Chu and Choi, 2000) in the *Concentrate here* quadrant, respondents described attributes as very important but performance levels are seen as rather low. Therefore improvement efforts should be concentrated here. In the *Keep up the good work* quadrant, attributes are perceived to be very important to respondents and they are showing a high level of satisfaction. Usually, items in this quadrant represent the destination's main strength. Furthermore, attributes positioned in the *Low*

priority quadrant are those with low importance and low performance. Although performance levels may be low in this quadrant, managers should not be overly concerned since respondents perceive those attributes as not being very important (Chu and Choi, 2000). Finally, according to the same authors, the *Possible overkill* quadrant contains attributes of low importance and relatively high performance indicating that respondents are satisfied with these attributes but managers should consider their efforts on the attributes of this cell as being overexploited. In that context, attributes in the *Possible overkill* quadrant can be the focus of cost-cutting and change management strategies (Abalo et al., 2007).

It should be noted that the relativity of the gridlines is a potential shortfall of the technique. The placement of the gridlines ultimately determines in which quadrant the attributes will appear. Therefore, as Wade (2003) points out, the goals of the destination should determine their placement. Griffin and Edwards (2012) argue that positioning the grid line on the performance scale above the mid-point allows managers to set a standard of quality that significantly exceeds "neutral", and therefore reflects a higher aspiration (Hollenhorst, Olson, & Fortney, 1992; Hudson & Shephard, 1998). Given the high ratings of the respondents included in this study (average importance rating is 4.2, and the average satisfaction rating of all attributes is 3.8) grid lines of importance and satisfaction are placed at the values 4.0 to reflect standards of high importance and high satisfaction.

Figure 1 shows the positions of the attributes in the satisfaction/importance grid. Nine attributes are placed in the *Keep up the good work* quadrant (*the beauty of nature and landscapes, preserved environment, cleanliness of the destination, equipment and maintenance of the beaches, friendly and hospitable residents, cordiality of employees in tourism, feeling of personal safety and security, quality of accommodation and catering facilities*). These results indicate that those attributes can be considered as the destination's strengths, since they are seen as being the most important attributes for the respondents and, at the same time, have been given the highest satisfaction ratings by the respondents. In order to continue providing quality services, the destination should seek, in the least, to maintain the performance of these attributes.

The quadrant called *Low priority* contains four attributes (*diversity of cultural events, facilities for children, sports facilities and excursion offering*). Those attributes are considered relatively less important, although their actual performance is below the mean score of all the other attributes' performances (Lee and Lee, 2009).

No attributes were positioned in the *Possible overkill* quadrant indicating that, in this case, there are no attributes of low importance and relatively high performance.
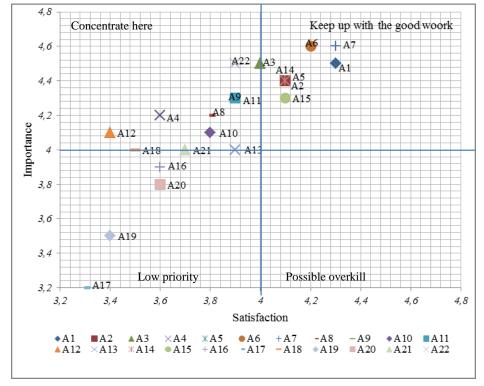
Figure 1: **Importance – Performance Analysis grid**

Note: (A1) The beauty of nature and landscapes; (A2) Preserved environment; (A3) Cleanliness of the destination; (A4) Equipment and maintenance of the beaches; (A5) Friendly and hospitable residents; (A6) Cordiality of employees in tourism; (A7) Feeling of personal safety and security; (A8) Quality of information on the destination's website; (A9) Availability of information in the destination; (A10) Clearly signposted tourist directions in the destination; (A11) Transportation links; (A12) Quality of local transport; (A13) Cultural and historic heritage; (A14) Quality of accommodation facilities; (A15) Quality of catering facilities; (A16) Diversity of cultural events; (A17) Facilities for children; (A18) Entertainment opportunities; (A19) Sports facilities; (A20) Excursion offering; (A21) Shopping opportunities; (A22) Value for money.
Source: Authors

IPA results suggest that out of the 22 attributes special attention should be directed to nine attributes positioned in the *Concentrate here* quadrant (*quality of information on the destination's website, availability of information in the destination, clearly signposted tourist directions in the destination, transportation links, quality of local transport, value for money, cultural and historic heritage, entertainment opportunities* and *shopping opportunities*). While respondents experience these attributes as being the most important ones, they are not satisfied, however, with their performances, indicating that the attributes are the apparent weak points of the destination. These results send an important message to destination management and the people responsible for the development of tourism in the off-season in this destination. Namely, it is necessary to invest in a well-designed information system (within and outside the destination), make improvements to directional signage as well as to transportation issues (within and outside the destination). Moreover, the provision of

more and better entertainment and shopping opportunities as well as enhanced presentation of the rich cultural and historical heritage has been recognised as the basic precondition to achieving the satisfaction of visitors, who will than get greater value for their money. One of the ways this could be done is through creative industry that can been use in a number of ways in tourism, including tourism products and experiences, revitalisation of existing products, valorising cultural and creative assets (Richards, 2013). This requires differentiated, innovative, and qualitatively distinctive offer tailored to the contemporary tourists (Stipanović and Rudan, 2014). Due to huge cultural heritage, focus on cultural tourism could be one of the ways for mitigating seasonality in this destination. However, the development of culture and entertainment tourism products should be creative and innovative in terms that they engage tourists in the authentic experience and provide a connection with residents who create the living culture of the destination (Kiralova and Malachovsky, 2015). For instance, different events, workshops, activities offering new forms of promotion and exploitation of various aspects of material and immaterial culture could yield with new experiences for tourists visiting this destination (Messineo, 2012). As Richards and Marques (2012) underlined, creative tourism could be a key development option (especially for mature destinations) since it responds to the need for tourism to re-invent itself as well as to the need for destinations to do something different in a saturated market. In addition, creative and innovative tourism products can provide tourists with more fulfilling, meaningful and more satisfactory experiences.

CONCLUSION

Continuous tourism development worldwide has increased competitiveness among destinations. Thus, destination management has to develop tourism supply strategies in order to satisfy the needs of tourists, and the literature stresses that the primary managerial criterion for success should be defined in terms of the level of tourist satisfaction (Bernini and Cagone, 2012). In this research, the novelty lies in studying satisfaction with a variety of attributes of Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera's off-season offering.

IPA analysis produced fairly clear implications for action in the off-season in the case of Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera. Unfortunately, there were no destination attributes that exceeded the visitors' expectations. The results of this research have revealed that although tourists are, in general, satisfied with the destination, many attributes need to be improved in order for tourist satisfaction to be enhanced. In terms of management implications, the results of IPA analysis point to which attributes, budgets and efforts should be prioritized. Product and service improvements should focus on attributes in the *Concentrate here* quadrant (Abalo et al., 2007). The results indicate that the destination should put more effort into providing information for tourists, due to the fact that respondents were expecting a higher quality and availability of information in the destination. In addition, tourists expect better and innovative presentations of cultural and historic heritage. Given the results obtained in this study, special attention should be focused on entertainment and shopping opportunities, since tourists staying in the destination during the off-season consider these attributes to be very important but at the same time find them to be less satisfactory. If these weak attributes improve

in terms of their enrichment and innovation, the perceived value for money will be also higher. Destination managers need to recognize that these attributes are of great importance in ensuring that tourists get maximum value out of their destination experience in the off-season (Griffin and Edwards, 2012). In this case, as destination management obtains information on the results of the attributes' performances directly from tourists, it can continue to provide those services that meet tourists' expectations, try to exceed expectations, and improve on aspects that perform poorly. In addition, these issues are particularly relevant for mature and multi-product destinations which have to compete with new tourist destinations and new tourism demands (Bernini and Cagnone, 2012). This could be starting point for a shift in planning tourism offering in this destination. Future tourism should provide authentic offerings along with the possibilities of tourists' active participation. This could ensure tourists' greater satisfaction and provide them with more memorable experiences.

It should be pointed out, however, that this study has considered only the attitudes of tourists visiting Rijeka and the Opatija Riviera. To validate the importance of the services set of attributes, more research needs to be conducted across a greater range of cities (Griffin and Edwards, 2012), in both Croatia and other parts of the world. In addition, it is recommended to monitor satisfaction over time, since it could be a key issue for the policy and managerial planning of a mature and multi-product destination that is keen on continuously providing strategies which meet tourist needs and preferences (Bernini and Cagnone, 2012) and avoiding 'strategic drift' (Dwyer and Edwards, 2009). Moreover, the analysis of satisfaction with respect to different demand segments (i.e. motivation of the trip) may contribute to a better planning of the destination and to overcoming seasonality or preventing stagnation (Bernini and Cagnone, 2012).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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