

THE CHALLENGES OF SMALL ENTERPRISES IN GENERATING DESTINATION CREATIVE OFFER

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Abstract

Purpose – The goal of the research is determining the role of small enterprises in defining the development concept of the island of Krk, aiming to valorise the cultural values in the qualitative transformation, rejuvenation and repositioning of the destination and focusing on the creation of a specific creative offer. The purpose of the research is to analyse the current creative offer and to define the goals and specific creative tourism development strategies based on creative initiatives of small enterprises and, in particular, the involvement and participation of the local population. The emphasis is placed on the synergetic linking of stakeholders based on the implementation of tourism product club, a culture of learning and knowledge and strategic destination development management.

Methodology – The theoretical determinants are based on a multidisciplinary study of the research topic. The applied research is based on in-depth interviews with tourism destination management and small enterprises, aiming to analyse the current situation and actively encourage the creation and development of creative tourism on the island of Krk, as well as define the options and possibilities of cooperation on the way to development. The survey data analysis is based on quantitative (average mark, standard deviation, rank) and qualitative interpretation of the respondents' attitudes and serves as the basis for the authors' concrete proposals and conclusions.

Findings – The research results are demonstrated at both theoretical and practical level. They are based on a critical analysis of recent literature, the analysis of good practice examples, survey results involving small enterprises and the entrepreneurs' viewpoints on the existent creative offer, its competitiveness and the potential concrete ways to innovate future strategies. The results are complemented with the authors' views and suggestions. The paper defines creative offer affirmation and a new business policy of networking and collaboration resulting from the establishment of a tourism product club. The main limitations of this research are its focus on a sole destination and a relatively small research sample.

Contribution – This work builds on the theoretical determinants of small enterprises and their role in the creation of the destination's creative offer, with specific application to the island of Krk. Although creative offer can revive Croatian tourism destinations, the key question remains: how to transform this inexhaustible resource base, creativity and knowledge of the local population into a highly competitive, innovative tourism offer and destination brand based on strategic management and institutional support.

Keywords small enterprises, innovation, creative tourism, development concept, destination development management, tourism product club

INTRODUCTION

By continuous innovation, tourism destinations are trying to improve their offer and achieve competitiveness on the tourism market. They are trying to find the ways and means of quickly responding to the challenges of the tourism market. Contemporary market demands point to the need for a dynamic creation of tourism offer; not only regarding the time dynamic, but also regarding the quality dynamic of the products they are creating. In all segments of tourism destination development (especially in offer creation), creativity opens up opportunities for new forms of tourism which have so far been less developed and which, as such, haven't been recognized as products with potential. As one of the stakeholders in the creation of a specific tourism product, small enterprises play an especially important role in creating new aspects of tourism offer.

1. CREATIVE OFFER – WAY TO CREATIVE TOURISM

Theoretical knowledge on creative tourism can be established only after cultural tourism, as one of the most significant selective forms of tourism, has taken a certain development path. Cultural tourism is prompted by different cultural attractions and events; culture represents an important element in the regional development of tourism destinations. Hmonen (2015, 92) states that it may be noted in the spirit of the cultural turn in regional development that culture, with its numerous dimensions and forms of behavior can produce material and intellectual well-being for the people and communities in a region, or conversely, that the culture itself may be a charming outcome of comprehensive well-being of a community.

Culture reveals new possible dimensions of development with an accent on cultural tourism. Although some of its elements have been present on the tourism market from the beginning of its recognition as a social phenomenon, concrete research on cultural tourism has been conducted only in the past thirty years. Steinecke (2007, 14-15) states that cultural tourism represents tourists' motivation and interest in culture, but also points to the question about the status that culture has within the undertaken journey (primary or secondary motive for travel). More recent considerations of cultural offer development and observations of the possibilities raised by the existing cultural offer point to the growing importance of focusing on creative offer forms and elements, initiated by creative individuals from local communities, creative spaces, cultural and creative industries, and creative management.

According to Stipanović and Rudan (2014), creativity in tourism development can be interpreted through an integrated series of different elements of both supply and demand that encompasses the totality and complexity of the destination perception. Instead of the static cultural tourism offer in which the tourist is only a passive observer, the new creative offer provides the tourist with new knowledge and values which are the result of his activities in the destination. This new, dynamic and integrated creative offer creates a new form of tourism, i.e. creative tourism.

Richards and Raymond (2000, 18) defined creative tourism as tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken. According to Volić (2010, 24-25), creative tourism is a new concept – a framework for different forms of tourism, which includes existential authenticity, creativity and individual creation of experience. Creative offer doesn't necessarily have to be related to destination characteristics (autochthonous cuisine, folklore, Glagolitic heritage, etc.); it can also be the result of specific, organized activities which take place in creative spaces (art, acting, photography workshops, etc.). Comprehensive planning (Fernandes 2011, 632) for creative tourism development is crucial for assuring positive visitor experiences, benefits for local residents and minimal adverse impacts.

Creative tourism (Richard 2001, 7) is more directly concerned with the development of the individual and is, as such, more closely related with inner-directed lifestyle. Furthermore, Long and Morpeth (2016, 18) state that focus on creative tourist practice requires attention to the capacity of individuals (travelling and experiencing the world as tourist) to act independently and autonomously through their possession and that it is important to recognize the creative potential of the tourist (Richards 2006, 1221). Rudan (2012, 727) defines creative tourism as the desire to acquire, develop and deploy reflexive knowledge about creative (artistic) expressions and practice. Richards (1244) notes that creativity has been integrated into tourism in a range of different forms, via creative people, products, processes, places and tourism experience, and that it demands creative destination management and optimal integration of business subjects, associations and local population with the aim of developing creative contents which will result in strengthening the destination competitiveness. Richards (2002, 228-236) points out that creative tourism can develop more quickly than other forms of tourism, but with lower costs. The same is confirmed by Kiralova and Malachovsky (2015-2016) who state that creative tourism diversifies the tourism offers without significant investments by optimizing existing tangible and intangible heritage; it has a positive impact on the profitability of the cultural infrastructure and adds value to tourism offer.

When discussing creative tourism in Croatia, it can be said that its development has only just begun and that certain destinations are trying to achieve quality and innovative breakthrough. In this form of tourism, interconnectedness of stakeholders is especially important, since their joint action can create a recognizable and competitive product (e.g. "Creative Tourism Austria"). However, in Croatia there is no systematic approach to this form of tourism. In Croatian literature, creative tourism is mentioned in recent documents which strategically direct tourism toward newer forms of tourism. Thus, creative tourism development is expected to occur within cultural tourism, since it allows for an active involvement of visitors in the local culture with an emphasis on the introduction of new-generation products that allow creative expression and interaction with the local environment (Ministry of Tourism 2013). Documents such as Cultural Tourism Action Plan (2015) do not suggest the means to systematically stimulate the development of creative tourism as a special selective form. At the level of counties, municipalities and cities of Croatia, creative tourism is not presented in the strategic documents as a possible form of development, unlike cultural tourism which often includes some elements of the destination's creative offer. Insufficient presence

of creative tourism in strategic documents bounds the local initiatives to local boundaries and leads to a lack of systematic approach to integral development which could bring considerable benefits to this form of tourism.

2. INTERACTION OF SMALL ENTERPRISES IN THE CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM DESTINATION

Entrepreneurship in all its forms is the holder of creativity in the creation of tourism offer, both in terms of management creativity and in the creativity of the area, events, and cultural-historical heritage (environment) in which they occur. Entrepreneurship in tourism can be defined as a process of resource investment in particular business activities in order to create products and tourism services and to achieve certain economic effects (Bartoluci 2013, 285-288). Those products and services whose uniqueness distinct them from the competition can be expected to achieve, with constant offer development and innovation, a long-term existence and the leading position on the market. Small enterprises are encountering problems such as limited financial and other resources (Bartoluci and Budimski 2010) and limited possibility of appearance on the tourism market. In tourism, the emphasis is on innovations which are applied on two levels – corporate and destination. Innovations in tourism are mostly based on the search for new products, the method of modification or new uses of existing products, satisfying new needs, using products with a new purpose, or in new situations. Creativity and collaboration are considered the most essential sources of innovation in tourism (Kiralova and Malachovsky 2015-2016, 103-104). Without the help of a systematic strategic development, tourism destination management and connecting with other stakeholders, small enterprises cannot independently build destination competitiveness.

Retaining the existing and attracting new tourists is conditioned by continuous offer innovation and development; it requires linking, synergy, collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders in overcoming individual limitations and creating new values and excellence. It needs to be based on a culture of cooperation and trust; initiating a horizontal, vertical and diagonal cooperation of stakeholders (the possibility of establishing tourism product club and cluster in order to innovate the existing and create new tourism product), and being actively involved in strategic destination management. From this arises a new business philosophy: cooptation as a synergy of cooperation and competition (Le Roy & Czakon 2015, 6). Competitor as a threat turns into an opportunity for development due to the possibilities opened by cooperation in increasing destination attractiveness. Joint action directed toward tourism product club primarily multiplies the intellectual capital and potential (joint research, knowledge sharing, generating new ideas, confrontation of attitudes, decision by consensus), and reduces the costs of activities. The profiling of a tourism product club (Stipanović and Rudan 2016, 217) is based on a new system of values, the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation of operational strategies, new business model and organisational structure in the creation of an integral, unique product (the possibility of connecting the accommodation, catering services, selective contents, events, recognition of local values). The key issues are: each stakeholder's level of motivation for involvement and action; the standardization of interrelations; leadership and

management directed toward achieving benefits for stakeholders (better negotiating position, exchange of experiences and knowledge, joint market performance, profit increase); tourists (a unique experience, emotional value, excellence, personalized service) and tourism destination (offer improvement and development, rejuvenation, branding and repositioning). The basic premises are the culture of knowledge, learning and connectivity, mutual complementarity and improvement which can grow into the main driving force of tourism development and destination brand.

3. SURVEY ON SMALL ENTERPRISES IN THE COMPETITIVENESS OF CREATIVE OFFER ON THE ISLAND KRK

The survey was conducted on the island of Krk (the city of Krk, municipalities Malinska Dubašnica, Vrbnik, Dobrinj, Njivice, Omišalj, Punat and Baška), the largest Croatian island with a rich cultural - historical heritage (castles, Glagolism – museums Krk, Vrbnik, Jurandvor, ancient heritage and The House of Frankopan) and with the potential for an integral development of creative tourism. The specific gastronomy of the island and the Mediterranean cuisine (lamb, cheese, prosciutto, figs, šurlice-traditional homemade pasta, Žlahtina, olive oil) are opening new opportunities for developing a creative gastronomic offer. The destination is unique for its Glagolitic heritage and folklore (playing on sopele, folk singing and dancing, folk costumes). Since the island of Krk is an inspiring place for artists of various profiles, there are also a number of art colonies and sculpture workshops. Krk also stands out for its natural preconditions (sea, beaches), natural attractions (footpaths, cycling paths, themed paths, climbing sites, ornithological reserves Prvić and Kutrep, medicinal mud in Soline, Biserujka Cave), and events (Krk Fair Lovrečeva, Baška Outdoor Festival, 4 Islands, Punat Summer Nights, bicycle ride Đir po Dubašnici).

In February 2017, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with tourism destination management and surveys of small enterprises. Research sample was determined in cooperation with the City of Krk TB in order to obtain more realistic, quality results. The survey included 46 respondents - seven representatives of tourist boards, 22 different creative providers (positive project examples are presented in the qualitative analysis), 7 caterers, 6 representatives of various associations and 4 representatives of tourist agencies. The sample included representatives of all micro-destinations on the island of Krk (8 municipalities and the city of Krk). The survey did not include the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics since they did not have a significant impact on the quality of responses and opinions. The survey encompassed 9 open-ended and 7 closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions were used to explore the respondents' basic knowledge of the key survey concepts (creative offer, collaboration, tourism product club) in order to determine the quality of the answers and understanding of the topic in question. The respondents were also asked for concrete answers relating to situational analysis (quality analysis of the offer in general and creative offer in particular, comparison with competitors) and scenario analysis (setting goals and concrete proposals for innovating operational strategies in developing creative offer, improving management development and synergetic linking of stakeholders). Closed-ended questions sought to evaluate the elements of the offer and promotion, as well as the problems related to offer development and stakeholder

involvement in managing creative offer development. The differentiation of the respondents contributes to the multidisciplinary approach to the research topic, based on data triangulation (Hair et al., 2011, 287), with an emphasis on economic viability and cultural sustainability at the destination level and the level of offer holders.

The average grade for tourism offer on the island Krk is 3.875 (using the five-point Likert scale, where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest grade), while the average grade for creative offer is lower - 3.25, proving that it is insufficiently recognized and implemented. It is impossible to determine how many creative tourists visit Krk since there is no such data available. The motives for visiting this destination are usually the sun and the sea, i.e. summer holiday tourism. This is demonstrated by the competitiveness ranking of selective contents which confirms that natural preconditions are still the key motivational factor (resulting in high seasonality), but also that there is a growing importance of new offer forms: outdoor offer, cultural offer, creative offer, events offer (surprisingly different grades given by entrepreneurs are confirmed by diametrically opposed answers).

The entrepreneurs perceive the creative offer as a segment of tourism offer whose contents provide the tourist (through workshops, other types of education, research tours etc.) with an opportunity to learn (and acquire) skills specific to the culture of the country or community, at the same time including the creative wealth, specifics or resources of the destination. Creative offer is developed by unifying various contents in order to create new values which will be presented on the tourism market in an innovative and multidisciplinary way and which will provide the tourists with a new experience that is different from the industrial, globalized and uniformed offer. The respondents emphasized the following creative contents on the island of Krk (the problem of perception and defining creative offer elements; i.e. the problem of interpretation of innovative and creative offer): recreational tours (activities) and events which aim to create the experience of the destination with all senses, musical education, concerts, workshops, musical culture in general, gastronomy, summer Glagolitics school, Glagolitic Park in Gabonjin, aquariums. The examples of successful projects are: Krk – the Island of Fairies (awarded at Days of Creativity and Innovation), which aimed to (marketably) exploit the relatively unknown legends of the island of Krk by creating a series of photographs; workshops by Cultural and Artistic Laboratory with the aim of raising public awareness of new forms of contemporary art, its potential and value; manifestations Creative Krk as a symbiosis of learning about the unknown locations of Krk and alternative concerts; wool workshops; ceramics workshops; storytelling workshops; creative workshops - making sculptures from marine debris; sculpture park "Arteco" Punat; sculpture colony Punat Sea Art; Underwater Pirate Park Punat; Folklore Festival Alpe – Adria, Krk Folklore Festival; Underwater photo marathon Cup... The positive sides of creative tourism are mainly associated with the destination's resource advantages (geographical location, cultural – historical heritage, natural resources...). The negative sides include insufficient offer (museums, heritage institutions), insufficient content promotion, the lack of experts (museologists, ethnologists, naturalists, historians...). The following problems in creative offer development have been identified: orientation towards mass tourism, insufficient stakeholder creativity and innovation, limited financial resources, stakeholders' conflicts of interest and communication problems, the lack of stakeholders'

involvement and interest, failure to recognize new trends in creative tourism, negative political, economic, legal and administrative influences... The confirmation of the current state of affairs can be seen in the following respondents' answers:

- "The current offer is not developed, but is rather present only sporadically and as part of guest entertainment offer. The rich cultural, historical and natural heritage is an interesting starting point for the development of a creative offer and represents a great potential to be exploited. "
- "The question is: how willing are the stakeholders to cooperate and how will they reap the benefits of their destination and the existing creative offer or offer in general in cooperation with the environment on the island of Krk."
- "Today, everything is reduced to individual initiatives of associations, small enterprises and individuals, but there is no joint action in that direction."
- "Krk's biggest rivals are Rijeka, Crikvenica and Opatija due to the administrative state of affairs; i.e. Krk is not even mentioned (e.g. the oldest festival in Croatia, the Krk Folklore Festival is not mentioned anywhere), neither in sports nor cultural activities. Thus, neither cultural associations nor sports societies come to the fore, which can be seen from the funds obtained by the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County."

The importance of creative offer in recognition and branding is rated 3.25 (scale rating: 1 –no importance; 5 – high importance) – identical as the grade for the quality of creative offer (although the entrepreneurs graded within the range 2-5), while Krk creative offer management is rated 3.0 (the problem of connecting all stakeholders within the micro – destinations and at the level of the entire island of Krk).

Survey results demonstrate that there is insufficient understanding of tourism product club and insufficient recognition of the benefits for the stakeholders, destination and tourists. The entrepreneurs evaluate the cooperation of stakeholders in the creation of creative offer with 3.14, which opens up great opportunities for improvement and potential development. The grades for stakeholders' involvement and efficiency are significantly different (the highest grades are given by the municipality and city tourist boards - 3.88, while the lowest are given by small entrepreneurs and local population who, in fact, should become the driving force of creative offer development).

Table 1: Evaluation of stakeholders' involvement and efficiency in the creation of creative offer

Island of Krk - Stakeholders	Average grade	Standard deviation
Municipality and city TB	3.88	0.125
Local government and self-government	2.88	0.5
Tourism offer holders	3.00	0.122
Local population	2.86	0.632
The Island of Krk Tourist Board	3.38	0.367
Small entrepreneurs in catering and tourism	2.75	0.719
Associations	3.57	0.490
Holders of cultural and creative industries	3.29	0.694
Overall grade for stakeholders' cooperation in the creation of creative offer	3.14	0.061

Source: Authors' survey results

The defined grades point to the need for incentive measures that would involve all stakeholders in the transformation of Krk creative offer and creating a distinctive product. The respondents stress the importance of autochthonous contents, the culture of learning and exchange of experiences and knowledge in stimulating development. They recognize the benefits of linking and cooperation, but are sceptical about the means of connecting, management and joint action for fear that individual interests will overcome the common interest. Based on the evaluation of the current situation and anticipation of future development, it is necessary to define the goals and ways of innovating operational strategies for creative tourism on the island of Krk.

4. KRK ISLAND - CREATIVE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The analysis of the current situation shows that the preconditions for creative offer development are insufficiently valorised in the identification of tourism development of the island of Krk. It is necessary to make qualitative steps forward in innovating operational strategies and creative offer development management. Based on the analysis of the current situation and anticipation of future creative offer development, we can define the following goals resulting from the respondents' attitudes:

- Quantitative goals: – supply – increasing the number of offer holders and stakeholders; demand – increasing the number of creative tourists, multiplication of incomes and profits
- Qualitative goals: – creative offer innovation, integration of stakeholders through tourism product club (joint creation of creative offer) and branding of Krk as a recognizable creative tourism destination in order to extend the season (the key problem of tourism)

In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to innovate the operational strategies:

- Research and development – the key lies in studying the trends in creative tourism supply and demand. It is necessary to explore the needs of creative tourists, define the activities of rivals in the present and the future, and anticipate and define changes in the environment as an opportunity to multiply advantages and eliminate weaknesses. In generating a qualitative response to market changes and actively creating the future, proactive and predicative research is the starting point for all innovations and at all levels.
- Marketing strategy – based on market research, there is a clearly defined necessity to improve the marketing strategies: segmentation, positioning and marketing mix. Creative tourists can become the key target segment of the island of Krk (creative offer as the basic motive of arrival, not only the supporting offer element). It is necessary to identify the preferences of this highly profiled market segment and fulfil all the requirements with a personalized offer. By improving its offer and promotion, the island of Krk needs to become recognisable as an oasis of creative offer, a natural jewel and the destination of cultural experiences. Through marketing mix innovation, it is necessary to find the answers to the means of innovating the offer (supply strategies) and promotion. Promotional mix development (advertising, sales promotion, publicity, public relations) must result

in the creation of a new image and perception of the island Krk. It is essential to diversify the limited resources into the most effective channels (the key issues: amount of investments, media types, promotional message, duration of promotion...) in order to create awareness about the creative values of the island of Krk. Promotional mix should be focused on the target segment and based on original solutions and the valorisation of heritage (example Glagolitism) in order to diversify from the competition and to put emphasis on new channels (internet, social networks...)

- Supply strategy– it is necessary to create new offer elements (based on the resource base and on connecting all offer forms into an integral creative product of the island of Krk) in such a way that would allow each micro-destination to accentuate its own particularities (positive competition in the creation of new values). The surveyed entrepreneurs suggest the following ways to improve creative tourism: inclusion of tourists in local events, introduction to local customs, creation of themed computer games relating to the island's heritage, Glagolitism workshops, folklore dance courses in hotels, olive intertwining workshops, local dialect (“veljotski”) and Glagolitism courses, local gastronomy workshops, organization of hiking and cycling tours presenting the cultural values and heritage (example: Franziskusweg - walking trail that connects 7 Franciscan monasteries on the island), bird watching, photo points. A great opportunity is also opened up by audio-management and the valorisation of sound in the creation of new values (product and promotion). For the entrepreneurs, the concept of creative tourism implies the totality of innovative offer (which often represents only the resources), and needs to be reconsidered in order to create a product from which creative tourism will develop. Creative tourists are not merely passers-by or static observers of the destination, they are creators who want to enrich, improve or develop their creative potential at a specific time and at a specific place. It is necessary to define the micro-locations of the island with individual creative offer elements and to work toward developing particular creative products intended for specific target segments (the emphasis should be on entrepreneurial ideas relating to the local gastronomy, cultural and historic heritage (Glagolitism, folklore), active workshops in natural environment (sea, island hiking trails etc.)
- Human resource strategy – intellectual capital based on the culture of learning, creativity and vision is the key resource for the development of creative offer. The priority is encouraging lifelong learning, creative tourism workshops and creating awareness about the possibilities of creative offer. It is necessary to manage the stakeholders and employees who should strive for self-realization in their own entrepreneurial initiatives and in cooperation, all with the goal of developing a recognisable creative offer of the island of Krk.
- Financial strategy – although finances are not the key resource issue, they represent a limiting factor for the development of entrepreneurs who are burdened with loans and who find it hard to come up with new financial sources. Therefore, it is vitally important to financially encourage and subsidize creative entrepreneurs in the realization of creative offer.

Innovation of operational strategies can be based on a qualitative improvement of creative offer development based on synergy, decentralization, involvement of all stakeholders, joint research, exchange of knowledge and information, generating new ideas... Forming of tourism product club on the island of Krk provides an opportunity for a synergetic development of creative offer that would lead to creative destination branding. Tourism product club, led by destination management (transformation of Tourist Board) and specialized agencies, should encourage and connect the stakeholders in achieving development, but also actively involve the local population that needs to become the generator of small and middle-size entrepreneurship and the incubator for new creative ideas in creative offer development.

The limitations of the research are small sample size and the general lack of knowledge and awareness about the possibilities of tourism product club. The research results can be theoretically built upon and practically applied to the creation and development of tourism products in each micro-destination, emphasizing their uniqueness.

CONCLUSION

21st century tourism is being transformed into an industry of experience based on creativity as the key orientation of development in achieving diversification from rival destinations and satisfaction of increasingly demanding tourist needs. Creative offer based on cultural preconditions, creativity and innovation of small entrepreneurship can grow into the key tourism product and destination brand. Creative offer provides tourism destinations with a new dynamic, but requires creative entrepreneurship, creative tourists and, above all, resources that make it possible. Creative offer of the island of Krk is based on isolated entrepreneurial initiatives which represent an additional offer element. The results of the survey reveal various perceptions and evaluations of creative offer and the stakeholders' role; failure to recognize the possibilities of cooperation, and differentiated creative tourism development visions and strategies. In creating a unique offer and a unique experience, the local population must become the driving force of development and the motivator for small enterprises in the valorisation of autochthonous elements and values.

Development can only be based on the culture of learning and cooperation in overcoming the limiting factors and achieving the synergetic effect. In valorising the creative potential and innovating operational strategies, the concept of creative tourism development based on systematic development, cooperation and tourism product club, can transform the island of Krk into a distinctive creative offer destination. However, in order to achieve this goal, further research is required, along with the inclusion of other stakeholders and tourists who are becoming the active co-creators of the offer.

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