

Strategic Management of Destination with Cyclotourism in the Function of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The research for this paper is of a scientific character, but motivated by the applicative need and is applicable. The aim of the paper is to identify and analyze elements in the tourism market that influence the process of efficient strategic planning of the destination through tourism products and services for the purpose of sustainability. Based on scientific methods it is possible to prove that effective strategic management of destination developing cyclotourism contributes to sustainability. This is shown through marketing policy, destination management, and analysis of the state and development opportunities of cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia. Two cycling routes in the Republic of Croatia and their content will be presented.

Keywords: marketing; destination management; development; sustainability; cyclotourism.

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to determine the elements that affect the possibility of including the resources of a certain space in tourism flows, so that effective management simultaneously influences the sustainable development of tourism. In addition to the general principles of scientific research, the spread of scientific knowledge and proving hypotheses, the goal of this research is to create reference points through which the scientific knowledge in a practical sense will contribute to the concrete improvements of tourist valorisation of space. This can be defined in the context of intensification of tourist valorisation of space by the development of cyclotourism. Cyclotourism can be viewed as a specific content by which each individual tourist destination can attract and justify the reasons for the tourist's stay. The goal of the overall strategic development is to achieve the key mass of well-presented, contemporary interpreted and professionally, effectively promoted tourism products. In order to achieve this goal, it is first to analyze the marketing influences from the environment. Macro marketing factors from the environment that determine the development of tourism most relate to the impacts from the technological and sociocultural environment, but the factors from the economic, political and legal environment also affect the competitiveness and development of tourism. In the research, formulation and presentation of results in this paper, methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative, descriptive and historical methods have been used. Based on scientific methods it is possible to prove that effective strategic management of the destination with the development of cyclotourism contributes to sustainability. The following text presents the marketing policy, state and development possibilities / prospects of cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia for the purpose of sustainability and two cycling routes in the Republic of Croatia whose content is presented.

2. Discussion

2.1. Marketing policy

The long-term development of tourism in the Republic of Croatia needs to be based on the active protection of natural and cultural-historical heritage (Gredičak, 2011a, 17). In the Republic of Croatia there are real, but insufficiently explored possibilities of applying and developing resources of a certain area in the function of tourism development. The Republic of Croatia is on the way out of the period in which it is lagging behind the developed world in all areas of economic and social life. We are witnessing daily dramatic attempts to reform the entire socio-economic system, according to the criteria and achievements of highly developed countries of civil democracy, where it is impossible to ignore their achievements in the field of marketing. Neglecting autarchy orientation and transition to a market economy implies a total and thorough restructuring of the overall macroeconomic environment, which also affects the area of tourism. By applying the appropriate marketing strategy, it is possible to increase competitiveness, accelerate economic growth, improve economic development, increase the propulsion of exports and imports, raise living standards, achieve a satisfactory level of welfare, and effectively engage in international economic relations and processes (Gredičak, 2008, 207). Eligible marketing strategy of tourism should enable the revitalization and long-term improvement of the developmental and competitive advantages of a particular region in the function of sustainability. It is necessary to introduce and adopt a specific strategy to achieve a certain level of efficiency, achieve the set strategic goals and proactively direct future development. The goal of the marketing strategy is to efficiently satisfy the consumer and adapt to different situations on domestic and foreign markets as the basis for achieving and maintaining competitive advantage. The general marketing strategies are

based on: analysis of external factors affecting the operation of the company – markets, consumers, competition, business definition and internal factors of company performance, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis), defining the mission, goals and strategies, selection of the optimal marketing strategy, planning, implementation and controlling of planned marketing strategies. This is also the framework for the marketing strategy.

By analyzing the external elements of the market segmentation, we try to obtain relevant business environment information. This environment usually consists of the scope and structure of technological potential, demographic characteristics, degree and structure of the economy, the rule of law and democracy, geographical dispersion and the characteristics of culture and society and contemporary creativity such as, for example, music, culinary, painting and construction (Gredičak, 2012, 9). We get answers to the questions: Who are the existing and potential competitors? Which strategic groups can be identified? What is their level of sales and market share? What are their strengths, weaknesses? Also important are the data on the size and projected growth of a particular market, cost structure, trends, current and future key success factors. Important information is also about consumers, such as what are the main segments, which are their motivations and unsatisfied needs. Below is an analysis of the environment that consists of five major drivers/forces: demographic, economic, technological, political and cultural.

Demographic trends do not change quickly, but they are an important factor in the market. That's why marketing experts are interested in population size, its geographic distribution and density, movement trends, age distribution, birth rates and mortality, marital status, racial, ethnic and religious structure (Pol, 2006, 17). Socio-demographic factors are also determined by age, occupation, and family status. The way the tourists use leisure time is changing depending on the stage in the life cycle of individuals and families. Physical abilities decline with aging, the need for socialization and personal fulfillment also changes with the position an individual has at work or within the community to which it belongs. Available income and time depend on work and family status. Identifying the age of consumers, tourism service providers will be able to determine the specific motivation needs and elasticity of prices for the age group that represents the target market (Senečić, 1997, 13). People in the age group under 25 and over 65 have the most available time. This is, however, a period when discretionary income is at the lowest level. Individuals with the highest discretionary income belong to a group of single employees and a group of people over 45 years. Employment, as well as the right based on the work that employees acquire: paid leave, shorter working hours and an extension of annual leave, has a major impact on the development of modern tourism and the increase in tourist spending. In most developed but also less developed countries, women participate in a high proportion of the total number of employees. On this basis, the role of the female population in the area of tourist consumption is growing, ie the need for the employed woman to be seen as a specific consumer segment.

Economic environment is a factor influencing purchasing power, just as much as people. Total purchasing power depends on current income, prices, savings and loans. For this reason, it is important to know the main changes in the trends of income and the structure of consumer spending. In all of this, an important role has so-called discretionary income (Senečić, 1997, 13-14), which means that the level of income of an individual and a family, which remains after settling the basic living primary and secondary needs, looking long-term, is in steady growth. In this sense, spending on leisure activities and expenditures for other categories of products and services is also growing faster. This also affects consumer behavior in terms of purchasing higher quality products and services, which also means buying status symbols, and the growing importance

of the „value for money“ category. This category – the value for money, is the foundation of the contemporary concept of so-called competition beyond price/off-price competitiveness. Modern consumers of products and services, and so in tourism, are no longer very sensitive to the price, but the offered products and services they evaluate from the point of satisfaction and the position that they provide.

Technological development in the contemporary world has its reflection on the tourist market. The development of information technology has revolutionized hotel and airline reservation systems. New media significantly improve promotional activities, way of shopping, products choice and tourist services. Transport infrastructure and the ability to access sites and facilities that make service offerings are largely influenced by technological factors, as they determine a suitable location and acceptable cost of services. Equally important are governmental measures and legislation that can cause significant changes. Political-legal factors can have a strong influence on all activities, including tourism. The tax system, interest rate policy, planning systems, health and social policy, economic policy and state control are important components in defining the marketing strategy. The cultural environment shows long-term trends towards self-fulfillment and immediate satisfaction (Kotler, 2008, 217). The society in which people live creates their fundamental beliefs, values, and standards. People almost unconsciously adopt a view of the world that determines their relationship to themselves, to others, to nature, and to the world.

The objectives are achieved by analyzing the tourism market are determining the attractiveness of the market and understanding of the dynamics of the market (Aaker, 2008, 23-24). Market analysis encompasses current and potential market size, market growth forecasts, market profitability, trends and developments, key success factors. In strategic thinking and developing a marketing strategy, it is important to evaluate future market trends. In this context, there are some basic long-term tendencies that play a key role, reflecting the overall volume and structure of tourism demand. The apparent current tendencies are: individualism, awareness and health care, environmental awareness, consumerism. Individualism is a worldview driven by right-wing political parties that focuses on the individual, in contrast to the earlier emphasized unity and collectivist movement. In this sense, people turn to themselves and strive to achieve their life ambitions based on their own efforts without greater support to the community to which they belong (Gredičak, 2009, 207). Awareness and health care are become the most striking aspirations in the modern developed world and have consequences on tourism demand. Healthy and natural nutrition, recreational activities, weight loss treatments, recovery program are all important elements of tourist spending. Ecological awareness as an expression of knowledge about the endangerment of mankind or of the pollution of soil, air and water, due to negligence on the consequences of certain activities on the human environment, is now a planetary phenomenon. In this context arise mass movements, political parties which in the center of their activity put the imperative of preserving the human environment. The implications of this movement on tourism are the preferences on those destinations that have so far managed to remain endangered and preserved. They are an excellent source of tourism development, namely, the so-called ecotourism (Ibid.). In this context we can analyze the possibilities of strategic planning of the destination through the development of cyclotourism in the function of sustainability.

It is extremely important to conduct a SWOT analysis. The basic purpose of the SWOT analysis is to collect information on internal forces and weaknesses to compare them with the data on the opportunities and threats that an company/enterprise or individual faces in the environment in which they operate. SWOT analysis, as a situational analysis, helps to bridge the strategic gap, ie the difference between the position in which the company/enterprise or individual currently stands and those in

which they would like to be (Renko and colleagues, 1999, 42). It can be implemented in a relatively short time and with relatively small resources. As far as its usefulness as part of the overall marketing strategy, it is based on the fact that the basics of each successful strategy are: exploiting the strength and opportunity (what works in our favor) and minimizing the weaknesses and threats (which poses a threat to us). In addition, strengths, weaknesses and threats need to be put into the time dimension, so that strengths and weaknesses are present based on the past and the opportunities and threats represent the future based on the present and the past.

The purpose of existence and action is expressed through the mission. This is a general statement about the strategy. The mission is a tool that allows generalization of strategic options, but also chosen strategy affects the content of the mission. In defining the mission it is important to include the product and the areas of application of technology, consumers, available resources and skills. Like any other component of the strategy, the mission should be tailored to its internal characteristics and resources, strengths and weaknesses as well as external factors. In defining the mission, the following factors are taken into account (Ibid.): internal characteristics and resources of the company, ie its strengths and weaknesses; external characteristics, ie favorable opportunities and threats; historical determinants, dominant values, and ethical and social principles. Mission content should be motivating. The mission should not be „making profits“. The content of the mission should emphasize the basic policy that is intended to be respected. The content of the mission should be given a vision and orientation for the next ten to twenty years. Missions are not something that is revised every few years in response to every new turn in the market. On the other hand, an existing mission needs to re-define once it lost its credibility or no longer defines optimal development (Nash, 1998, 155-156). The main goal of marketing activities is to meet the needs of consumers, in this case tourists, while achieving the benefits of the marketing promoters and stakeholders of tourism. It is very important that goal carriers set realistic goals that can be achieved with a certain commitment of those carriers/holders. In order to achieve the set goals, there should be certain measures to accompany tourism development, such as fiscal policy measures (export premiums), financial policy measures (lending conditions, favorable interest rates) and general government policy. Such joint actions of the state and participants of the tourist offer are called the coincidence of the marketing goals. The strategy is, if properly set, the foundation for success, and that is one of the reasons why dealing with a strategy can be profitable and intellectually useful. A successful strategy must be market-oriented, based on marketing principles.

When talking about promotional activities on the tourist market, they should be a combination of all forms of promotional activities. This creates a prerequisite for achieving better sales results. In order to achieve the set goals of market communication, tourism promotion must be more agile. This, first of all, involves creating and applying a brand, creating additional promotional materials, and undertaking new promotional activities. Under the brand, it means the production of a logo, creating a slogan and selection of protective color. In this way, the design and verbal message creates a recognizable visual identity. As part of the development of promotional materials, it is necessary to create brochures of tourist products, a map of itineraries offering with round or thematic excursion, a tourist magazine, a multilingual quality guides of the region with a description of the material, cultural, architectural and spiritual heritage, souvenir program (Richards and Bonink, 1995, 174). Regarding promotional activities, it is necessary to present tourism at carefully selected international fairs and to advertise in the media. In the era of various computer games, a new way to promote the Croatian tourism, create a database and introduce modern IT equipment to tourism. This also provides the

basic premise for good communication between tourism and economy users. It is important to hold special promotional actions, organize information and study tours for journalists and travel agents, media communications, companies and institutions. Interpretation panels/boards with basic, interesting information about the importance of individual sites or facilities are a very effective and efficient way to increase the attractiveness of area with relatively small financial resources. With a well-located and well-designed interpretive panel, a certain tourist destination turns into a „living“ area and an interesting experience, ie attraction.

One of the primary marketing-mix elements is product development. It is assumed that the product must be maximally tailored to the needs and preferences of consumers (Grbac, 2005, 22). The products meet socio-positive needs, ie certain aesthetic, ideological, moral, ethical and similar socially established criteria. So the question is what product to choose? It is not easy to decide between existing, existing obsolete, the existing modified or completely new products. In order to facilitate easier decision-making it is necessary to carry out market research using scientific methods. Such research should identify which and what products tourism market are looking for, what products are offered by competition and based on results form a specific product, while respecting the valid criteria (Demonja and Gredičak, 2013, 121-122). Tourism development should enable revitalization and long-term improvement of the competitive advantages of a particular area. The fact is that the properties and characteristics of the resources meet the tourist needs. In this regard, a certain resource will attract and bind only those segments of tourism demand that will meet its specific needs (Gredičak, 2011b, 8). In this context we can also observe cyclotourism as a tourist product in the function of sustainable development of the destination, which will be discussed below.

2.2. Developmental possibilities of cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia in a sustainable development function

Although the Republic of Croatia records the increase of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, statistics confirm that continental part of the Republic of Croatia does not realize 2% of the total tourist traffic in the Republic of Croatia. In addition, due to still underdeveloped tourism and basic infrastructure, there are no serious hotel investments on the continent, with the exception of some destinations. In addition to health tourism, it is considered that in the future for the continent a key will be development of cultural tourism and cyclotourism as well as rural tourism in rural households. These are also the most prepared market tourism products that can initially launch investment and content development. Cyclotourism or cycling tourism is a form of sustainable tourism that has been developing more and more in almost every country in recent years. Except for the daily excursions that regular tourists or local residents take during their vacation or weekend, it also applies to bicycling long distances on cyclotouristic routes.

Over the last few decades, the whole concept of tourism has transformed and began to valorize unconventional destinations and attractions, tourists are extremely active and are interested in the spirit of the place and the overall experience that a certain destination can offer. Cycling represents selective forms of tourism, which has developed under different influences and transformation of tourism. It represents a form of tourism in which the use of bicycles is an integral part of the journey and that most of the time takes place in a clean, ecologically preserved and attractive natural landscape. Also, bicycle riding is a tourist activity that is mostly harmless to the environment and nature and most often does not require large interventions and repair of the damage caused to the environment. If countries decide to develop cycling tourism routes, in addition to increase tourist spending itself, ecologically quality and cost-effective connectivity with other countries in the region is

achieved. This increases cohesion and cooperation with other countries. The Republic of Croatia as a destination has a remarkable potential for cyclotourism development. All the pre-conditions that a cyclotourist-developed destination should have had to be met. The Republic of Croatia has an attractive environment, a factor that cyclotourists appreciate, and is also rich in cultural and historical heritage. The Republic of Croatia is very close to major emission markets, which is an additional opportunity that can be used as cyclotouristic destinations. Also, tourists perceive the Republic of Croatia as a safe country, and today, in view of current events, it is a valuable advantage.

On the topic of cyclotourism within the European Mobility Week, held every year from 16 to 22 September in Croatia, Croatian representative in the European Parliament Davor Škrlec organized two panel discussions on sustainable mobility in cities and cyclotourism in towns of Koprivnica and Zagreb, in co-operation with the German representative in the European Parliament Michael Cramer (Green/ESS) and representatives of local authorities and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia (Rihelj, 2017). Representative Michael Cramer is the initiator of the EuroVelo13 cyclotourism project and author of the book „The European Bicycle Trail – Iron Curtain“ which connects sustainable tourism with European history and culture. This European bicycle trail is over 10,400 km long and runs through 20 different countries, of which 14 are members of the European Union, including the Republic of Croatia. Cyclotourism is very developed in some regions of the European Union, but there are also regions where cyclotourism is not generally recognized and as such does not exist. This wide range shows the importance of the participation of local, regional and national authorities. With its very diverse landscape, cultural and historical sites, the Republic of Croatia has a huge potential for the development of cyclotourism. The Croatian National Tourist Board supports projects such as „MedCycleTour“, developing the EuroVelo8 – Mediterranean route which is in the Republic of Croatia stretches from Istria to Dubrovnik. It is important to keep track of projects at an interregional level and not reduce the cycling infrastructure at local and regional level as well as the state borders. It is a great advantage that such infrastructure can be used for cyclotourism, but also for daily travel from a place of residence to work. The total economic benefit from cyclotourism in 2013 for all EU member states amounted to 513 billion euros, which is more than 1,000 euros per capita. According to a study of the European Parliament from 2012, the annual cyclotourism income in the European Union amounted to 44 billion euros, while, for example, earnings from cruise ships was 39 billion euros. Cruisers do not fall into a sustainable form of tourism because of the negative impact on the environment and the increasing burden of the cities and ports they are in, while cyclotourism has no adverse impact on the local community and can be developed throughout the year, thus extending the tourist season. This is also one of the goals of The Strategy for Development of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia Until the Year 2020 (Official Gazette 55/2013). Bike tourists travel with little luggage and spend a lot more on food as opposed to guests from cruisers which have all available on board. Such guests require a good infrastructure with very small adjustments to the existing tourist offer according to their needs. Although the European Union invested billions of euros in large infrastructure projects, smaller infrastructure projects/ventures continued to work at local, regional and national levels. Still lacks many links along the cross-border railway lines, as well as among other forms of public transport and cycling networks between the regions, even within one country, thus hampering the daily mobility of citizens. They are therefore made a proposal on connecting roads that are missing, so-called „Missing Links“. Guided by the slogan „Small but Powerful“, they analyzed more than 250 cross-border connections in the European Union, focusing mainly on regional roads outside the main corridors. They have been able to include the bicycle network in the

guidelines of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), which means that they can now be co-financed from the appropriate EU funds. After years of advocacy by the regions, civic initiatives and politicians, the European Commission has finally taken the idea of „Missing Links“ and in July 2017 for the first time decided to allocate 140 million euros to finance cross-border smaller scale connections that does not currently exist. The Republic of Croatia, as well can have benefits of this initiative.

Paul Bradbury, a Briton from Manchester, with an address on the island of Hvar in the Republic of Croatia, probably the most widely read and most influential blogger who writes about the Republic of Croatia in English on the portal „Total Croatia News“, also launched a portal dedicated to cyclotourism „Total Croatia Cycling“ (<http://www.total-croatia-cycling.com/>). An English promoter of Croatian tourism shared his experience in Croatian tourism at the international conference „Innovation and sustainable development of tourism of special interests“ that was held in Zagreb, in April 2016, organized by the Association of Croatian Travel Agencies (UHPA). At the aforementioned conference, in the panel on „The successful promotion in five words: Give them what they want“, Bradbury presented step by step the true story of how the idea of writing a guide about the Croatian island turned into a positive force and unconventional tourist promotion of the destination at national and international level, and is easily applicable to other destinations. Bradbury then presented his vision of cyclotourism in Croatia: „Bicycling is constantly mentioned and promoted, and there is no national web site for biking, but all the information is decomposed on the pages of tourist boards, often without basic information. The potential for cyclotourism development in the Republic of Croatia is huge, there are already several very interesting initiatives in the country, but everything is done in isolation with no destination connections.“ Today, on the „Total Croatia Cycling“ portal, Bradbury cooperates with the entire cycling community and everyone who have or are planning any event related to cycling and bike racing. On the portal is an interactive map with bicycle paths in the Republic of Croatia, a list of races and events with information, cycling tours and accommodation facilities which has bicycles contents and blogger texts.

The Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia has also recognized the role that cyclotourism could have in the function of sustainable development of a tourist destination and in the year 2017 co-financed the development of operational plans for development of cyclotourism which defined the optimal lines for cycling routes and laid the foundation for cyclotourism development on the continent. For the more powerful positioning of continental Croatia as a tourist destination, the Operational plans for the development of cyclotourism of 14 continental counties were made (<http://www.mint.hr/vijesti/ministarstvoturizma-za-razvoj-cikloturizma-u-2018-osiguralo-vise-od-10-milijuna-kuna-za-52-razvojna-projekta/13199>). The second cycle of the same Program for development of tourism infrastructure co-financed the creation of Operational plans for the development of cyclotourism of coastal counties that had not created this document to achieve balance in cyclotourism offer and developed a national network of bicycle lanes, trails and routes, as well as all the necessary accompanying cyclotouristic offer. In 2018, the financial support is followed by the Operational plan for the development of cyclotourism of the counties from 2017-2020, which co-financed the development of traffic analyzes for the purpose of tracking and marking cyclotouristic routes, creation/installation of signaling/information boards along these routes, arrangement/equipping cyclotourism routes and service stations for repairing bicycles, making maps, making or upgrading a county-level website, making or upgrading a county mobile application, creating „bed and bicycle“ standards for accommodation facilities, setting bicycle traffic counter at the border crossing points, and other (<http://www.mint.hr/vijesti/ministarstvo-turizma-osiguralo-pet-milijuna-kuna-za-razvoj>

cikloturizma-na-kontinentu/11895). The cyclotourism development program on the continent in the Republic of Croatia plays an important role in the development of continental tourism, which ultimately contributes to a more balanced tourism development, the extension of the tourist season and the positioning of the Republic of Croatia as a destination of diverse and rich tourist offer. In accordance with this goal, since 2017, in the Coordination Body for the development of cycling tourism in the framework of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia (<https://cikloturizam.hr/>), operates National EuroVelo Coordination Center for Croatia (NECC), co-ordinated by the members of the Coordination Body and Association Cyclist Syndicate. EuroVelo or the European bicycle route network, is the project of the ECF – European Cyclists' Federation and national and regional partners, and its main goal is to link existing and planned national and regional cycling routes to a unique European network. The Coordination Body for the development of cyclotourism in Croatia with its activities has been involved in the EuroVelo project from 2016, since it has existed, or significantly from 2017 when joined the ECF membership (<https://cikloturizam.hr/eurovelo/>).

According to estimates by UNWTO in Europe there are currently more than 60 million active cyclists, 60% men and 40% women, of different age groups. About 90% of cyclotouristic trips/journeys are organized independently and only 10% through travel agents (Action Plan for the development of cyclotourism, 2015, 25). According to the European Parliament's 2013 figures, the cyclotourism market of the European Union, including Norway and Switzerland, is growing on a daily basis (Ibid.). The number of one-day visitors who use bicycles during their trip/journey is difficult to estimate, while the number of cyclotourists who spend at least one overnight stay is estimated at around 20 million. Slightly more than one-quarter of European cyclotourism journeys/travels are taking place in Germany, and about 8% in the Scandinavian countries. The cyclists belong to a group of medium or highly educated tourists. Most often they travel in pairs (50%), about 30% cyclotourists come in a group of 3 to 5 people, and the remaining 20% are single. Almost 60% of cyclists change their accommodation several times during traveling, while about 40% are staying in one destination. Cyclotourists spend on average 53 euros per day including accommodation, while one-day visitors spend on average 16 euros per day (Action Plan for the development of cyclotourism, 2015, 25-26) Furthermore, according to EuroVelo research it was concluded that cyclists in greater intensity than most other tourists use the products of domestic manufacturers and visit local shops, crafts and plants (<http://www.eurovelo.org/news/>). For this reason, it is important for them to have a large number of domestic and innovative manufacturers/producers, and their availability and quality is also important for them. As far as traffic infrastructure is concerned, it is emphasized that for cyclotourists are extremely important road safety. For this reason, in order to attract cyclists, it is important to mark cycling routes and ensure road safety. In the absence of well equipped cycling paths and routes, cyclotourists are turning to other routes, and then prefer roads with relatively less traffic and achieving low speeds. Cyclists are especially interested in destinations that have organized and marked routes that offer various additional facilities and attractions that will make the stay of tourists interesting and enjoyable. When choosing accommodation, cyclotourists give preference to accommodation facilities tailored/adapted to their needs, ie capacities that meet the so-called „bike and bed“ standards. These standards primarily include the ability to accept cyclotourists for just one night, secure bicycle storage rooms, space for drying clothes and travel gear, a variety of breakfast offers or the possibility to use the kitchen, the availability of precise and quality maps of the region, preferably with marked bicycle routes, the availability of public transport information, the ability to use tools for simple repairs, and information about locations and working hours of

bicycle services in the destination or its vicinity/neighboring in case of major breakdowns/failures.

In the Republic of Croatia cyclotourism is still a product of development. By analyzing geographical factors and tourist resources, it can be concluded that the Republic of Croatia has great potential for cyclotourism development, but it is still unused to date. The Strategy for Development of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia Until the Year 2020 (Official Gazette 55/2013) recognizes cyclotourism as one of the tourism products with the greatest prospect of development. There are many reasons for the underdevelopment of cyclotourism, and the main ones are: inadequate cyclotouristic infrastructure, insufficient practice of cycling in the local community, insufficient knowledge of the local community, lack of co-operation between public and private sector stakeholders and inadequate number of „bike friendly“ facilities. In the future, it is extremely important that the providers of accommodation services are recognized as a very important developmental element, but also to provide them with certain incentives in order to adapt their facilities to cyclists („bike and bed“ systems and „bike friendly hotels“). As a potential problem, there is still an inadequate cyclotouristic demand that would make the service providers more orientated towards cyclotourists, especially in the continental part of the Republic of Croatia.

2.3. Cycling routes in the Republic of Croatia

The Republic of Croatia has no classified routes and cyclotourism products, however, it has traced routes (<https://www.cyclingcroatia.com/>). In the continuation of this paper, two successful and lovingly visited routes in the Republic of Croatia will be presented: „Dalmatia and National Parks Cycling Tour“ and „Istria Wine and Gastro Cycling Tour“.

The „Dalmatia and National Parks Cycling Tour“ allows bikers to visit three national parks of the Republic of Croatia: Plitvice Lakes, the oldest national park in Southeastern Europe and the largest national park in Croatia, Paklenica with a beautiful coastline where you can fully experience the magic of the Adriatic Sea, and the magical canyon and Krka waterfalls. In addition to these three national parks, riding bicycles on this route, tourists have the opportunity to get acquainted with the local architecture and customs of Dalmatia, and visit the historic island of Hvar, one of the most beautiful islands in the world, the island of Korčula known for white wines and beautiful old town, and Dubrovnik, an architectural masterpiece. This route begins in the capital city of Zagreb, and ends in the city on the Adriatic coast, Dubrovnik. The total duration is 10 days and 9 nights, approximately 27 to 53 kilometers per day, and daily biking is 3.5 to 4 hours. By field analysis and daily use of bicycles, this cycling route is classified as recreational and all those who do not ride a bike are welcome. The route is easily customizable and accessible to everyone. The average cost of this route is about 3,550 US\$. The price includes: 27 meals, 9 breakfasts, 9 gourmet dinners with drinks, 8 lunches with drinks, 3 wine tastings with snacks, wine tasting with prosciutto and cheese, oysters and mussels tasting (<https://www.cyclingcroatia.com/guided-tours/dalmatia-and-national-parks-cycling-tour>).

„Istria Wine and Gastro Cycling Tour“ is located in Istria, the largest peninsula on the Adriatic, at the beginning of the Adriatic, between the Trieste and Kvarner Bay. This quiet peninsula has historically been part of the Venetian empire, and it is a region of diverse landscapes with wavy hills, pine forests, wheat fields, vineyards, olive groves and azure sea. All of these features make Istria one of the most visited tourist destinations, not only in the Republic of Croatia but also in the Mediterranean as a whole, and known as the „Green-Blue Region“. This area has a rich and valuable resource base for cyclotourism development and which route confirms. This route allows bikers to visit the towns of inland Istria (Motovun, Oprtalj) and the coastal towns (Rovinj, Umag, Poreč and Pula) and taste delicious dishes

prepared in this area and enjoy excellent wines. This route takes its course throughout Istria. Its started in the city of Poreč and ended in Pula. The average cost of this route is 2,500 US\$. The route lasts for a total of 7 days and 6 nights, with an average daily ride on the bike from 32 to 53 kilometers, and runs on a bicycle from 2 to 4.5 hours per day. This cycling route is classified as recreational and all tourists who do not ride a bike often are welcome. The price includes: breakfast every day, 6 gourmet dinners, 3 lunches, 3 wine tastings, 2 olive oil tastings, tasting of cheese, prosciutto, oysters, mussels and truffles (<https://www.cyclingcroatia.com/guided-tours/istria-wine-and-gastro-cycling-tour>).

3. Conclusion

While the application of marketing in all spheres of activity in developed countries today is an unavoidable fact, such application in the Republic of Croatia, and that means marketing orientation of the society, is still the future we are striving for and according to which this paper was directed. The focus of the social concept of marketing is not only the needs of a particular segment of consumers, but also the needs of the whole society, which means that the need to preserve the characteristics of a tourist destination in sociological, cultural and ecological terms should be taken into account. The future development of tourism is inconceivable without a logic thinking, in this lies its survival and further development. To create a concept of tourism development at lower spatial levels, it is important to thoroughly study and determine the possibility of tourist features, characteristics and tourist values and the reception capabilities of all those resources (natural and social) that will meet the needs of tourists. The fact is that the properties and characteristics of the resources meet tourist needs. In this regard, some resources will attract and bind to itself only those segments of tourism demand that will meet their needs and characteristics. This brings us to the possibility that on the basis of knowledge of these properties determine the types and forms of tourism that can be developed in a certain/specific destination. Tourism as a social phenomenon is extremely dynamic and clearly shows the

trend of tourist movements growth. Tourism of the Republic of Croatia is developing and every year more impressive figures are being realized. The problem is the excessive dependence of the Republic of Croatia on tourism, as tourism accounts for around 18% of GDP. This is risky because tourism is highly sensitive and every major negative impact in the environment can lead to shortages/collapse of tourism and economy. By analyzing the state and the environment, it was concluded that the Republic of Croatia has exceptionally favorable conditions for the development of cyclotourism. In the The Strategy for Development of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia Until the Year 2020 (Official Gazette 55/2013) cyclotourism is recognized as a tourism product with high potential. However, the fact is that today cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia is not yet sufficiently developed and most of the potentials are unused. Also, it can be concluded that cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia was not planned and strategically developed, but has simply happened. The product has been identified as highly perspective/promising, but still the steps are not yet taken to modernize the offer and adapt the infrastructure. Furthermore, Croatian legislation is not at all adapted to this form of tourism. Various stakeholders should participate in the promotion and creation of cyclotourism products, because only in this way created integral product will be attractive to tourists and will have a special/particular added value. In addition to increasing economic prosperity, cyclotourism has many other positive effects in the function of sustainable development such as, for example, pollution reduction, traffic jams reduction, health promotion, cheaper transportation. In order to exploit all the potentials of cyclotourism in the Republic of Croatia, it is important to strategically plan its development and do the necessary steps. It is important to meet the following prerequisites: to cooperate with all key stakeholders in the destination, to educate the local community, to improve the infrastructure, to introduce incentives for accommodation providers and to raise awareness of the positive effects of cycling in society. By meeting these requirements cyclotourism could be developed in a planned direction, and the Republic of Croatia could be recognized as the destination of cyclotourism, with positive effects on the economy and society.

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