



Research Article

## Program “Croatia 365” in a Function Of Stronger Market Positioning of the Continental Part of Croatia on Foreign Tourism Markets

Biljana Lončarić<sup>1\*</sup> and Drago Ružić<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The pilot project of the program “Croatia 365” was started by The Ministry of Tourism in September 2014, with the primary objective of a better use of resources during the pre- and postseason and showing Croatia not only as “a sun and sea” tourist destination, but also as a destination with tourism opportunities throughout the year.

The pilot project, which was undertaken in the postseason in 2014 and had a total value of 4.8 million HRK, included 22 destinations, of which 7 continental, with the main activities carried out through offline and online advertising in key tourism markets and through web subpages of the Croatian Tourist Board with content based on 6 key tourism products.

Taking into the consideration that all of the continental PPS destinations except Plitvička jezera, according to Regulations on the periods of season, pre-season, post-season and after-season in tourist municipalities and cities (NN 92/09, NN 146/13, NN 35/14), have been classified in the category of the cities and municipalities where the main tourist season lasts the whole year, the goal of carried out primary research was to determine the actual effects produced by the undertaken measures in the framework of the project “Croatia 365” in 6 continental Croatian PPS destinations, as well as to examine whether the eventual increase in tourism traffic in these destinations during the period from 1 October 2014 to 31 March 2015 had been result of the activities of PPS destination management or of the activities that had been undertaken at the level of individual tourist municipalities and cities networked in the PPS destinations.

The goal of the work is to analyze and to synthesize results of the primary research, meaning finding out if the directors of tourist boards in tourist municipalities and cities networked in the PPS continental Croatian destinations where tourist season lasts the whole year are satisfied with the application of the program “Croatia 365” in their areas, as well as finding out if Croatia created an adequate legal and institutional frameworks for the effective operation of the PPS destinations.

In the context of applied methodology it was given a review of the scientific literature dealing with the concept of “tourist destination” and “management of tourist destination”; the process of connecting

tourist destinations within the concept “Croatia 365” was discussed and the primary research, in the form of a web questionnaire, was conducted among the directors of the continental Tourist Boards which had taken a part in the pilot project, with the response of 6 from 7 of them (85,7%).

### Keywords

Croatia 365; PPS destination; Continental Croatia; Networking; Pre- and post-season; Tourism traffic

### Introduction

The pilot project of the program “Croatia 365”, started by the Ministry of Tourism in September 2014, included 22 destinations, of which 7 continental. As its main goal was a better use of resources during the pre- and post-season, it is questionable if and to which extent this program has yielded adequate results in the continental part of Croatia, in which, in accordance with the positive legislation, tourist season lasts the whole year, and not just during the summer months.

For this reason, during July and August 2015, there was the research conducted among the directors of the continental Tourist Boards in which were the seats of the PPS destinations. The goal of the research was to find out, on the basis of the analysis and synthesis, to which extent these destinations were satisfied with the application of the program “Croatia 365” at their areas; then, if these measures had any results in the sense of increasing of tourist traffic as well as if Croatia created an adequate legal and institutional frameworks for the effective operation of the PPS destinations.

### Literature Review

In the scientific and professional literature authors have not encountered the term “PPS destination” in which expression the term “PPS” actually means an abbreviation for the term “pre- and post-season”. In the literature dealing with tourism issues are defined and explained only the terms as “tourist city” and “tourist destination”.

While the term, a tourist city means “a place visited by many tourists and visitors on day trips and, with equipment that allows the reception and stay of tourists”, a tourist destination (lat. *destinatio - destination*) includes “the wider area of the tourist city which borders functionally wider to the line on which stops the influence of a unique tourist product whose core tourist destination makes” (Australian Government, Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2006, 68).

In the tourist destination visitors remain temporarily in order to participate in the interaction and the tourism related attractiveness, while passengers must not be observed in the manner established by the administrative division of a given area. That destination can be part of a particular administrative area, or include all the administrative area even exceed its limit (Pike, 2008, 26).

Most of the empirical studies do not burden the definition of tourist destinations, but merely deals with the sites where there is the traffic of visitors or where it might take place. In this context, these sites are analyzed and measured in terms of the degree of

\*Corresponding author: Biljana Lončarić, Tourist Board Slavonski Brod, Slavonski Brod, Croatia, E-mail: [info@tzgsb.hr](mailto:info@tzgsb.hr) Carla

Received: December 22, 2015 Accepted: July 04, 2016 Published: July 10, 2016

attractiveness, guest satisfaction, the success of managing the flow of guests and management of destinations, but most often, however, in the context of the possibility of taking a good position in the tourism market. So a tourist destination may be smaller or larger spatial unit, all depending on how the certain area is perceived by tourist demand.

In addition to enough attractive power, equipment for the arrival and stay of tourists in tourist destinations is also very important. Destination area must have an offer that will meet the demands of visitors, generally very heterogeneous in terms of age, ethnicity, social and professional status and another. A tourist destination has several components such as attractiveness, special service activities, access, availability, activities and supplementary service activities [1]. It is no longer considered "a package of tourist services and content" [2], but a whole made by a variety of tourist offer and different travel experiences [3].

As all previous definitions show that tourist destinations should include a comprehensive tourism product, the concept of destination varies from case to case, so, the term "destination" sometimes means just a specific tourist site or zone, but sometimes the region, country, group of countries or even a continent. Regardless of this, in terms of increasing globalization tourists are becoming more demanding, while their needs for experiences have been growing, so we need to create more complex tourist products and manage them well.

However, all tourist destinations have to put in the focus of their thinking service users whose needs and desires should be met, but also they need to monitor the activities of competitors, as well as external factors in the environment. In all these cases, effective marketing activities would have to do the core of a successful strategic management of tourist destinations, including public and as well private sector, with the aim of creating integrated tourism products at the destination by which the destination will be adequately positioned on markets.

In terms of increasing globalization tourists are becoming more demanding, while their needs for experiences have been growing, so we need to create more complex tourist products and manage them well. This largely involves intensive co-operation of all actors involved in the creation of tourism products, primarily public and private sector, because only through synchronized and coordinated activities, tourist destinations will be able to consolidate its position and increase their share in certain tourist markets.

Therefore, the role of management of tourist destinations is primarily to create a balance between profitable business in the tourism industry, competitive position in the market, an attractive environment, the positive experience of visitors and satisfied local population that supports the development of tourism (Pike, S., Destination Marketing, 113), provided that the destination management organization needs to become a leader of destination development strategy [4].

### **The Program "Croatia 365"**

When talking about the Croatian tourism, it is evident that one of the characteristic features of the tourism demand is time concentration [5], and a pronounced seasonality. The statistics data show that in 2014 from a total of 66.5 million realized nights, in July and August were recorded them almost 62% [6]. Seasonality of tourism in Croatia is primarily caused by geographical features, in particular climatic factors, without neglecting any influence of other factors such as consistent trend in the use of vacations from

certain European countries from which there is a largest generation of the tourist demand for the Croatian tourism; changes in trends in the behavior of the tourist consumers; influences of travel agents to select the destination and type of travel; economic growth in major tourist source markets; transformation of mass tourism market to the specific forms of tourism; specialization of the tourist offer, etc. [7].

Seasonality in tourist traffic flowing has resulted in many problems such as uneven implementation of economic and other effects; distortion of the image on the economic potentials of tourism; underestimation and misunderstanding of the importance of tourism in the financial and institutional support for its development; excessive use of individual tourism resources excessively evaluated over several months of the tourist season, etc. (idem, 146), which could be reduced by the even distribution of tourist traffic by months.

The pilot project of the Ministry of Tourism "Croatia 365" has launched in September 2014 [8], precisely with the primary aim of better use of resources during the pre-and postseason and of showing Croatia not just as "asun and sea" destination, but also as a destination with tourism opportunities throughout the year.

Through projects such as the project above mentioned, the state influences the raising standards and improves quality of life; educates population; develops rural areas through infrastructure and getting medical care; develops a middle class; strengthens local cultural values and customs [9], and puts tourism in overall economic growth and the inflow of foreign direct investment, as well as stabilizes the balance of payments relations and national labor market power [10].

Plan of pre- and postseason (PPS Plan) of Croatian tourism as a component of the marketing plan for Croatian tourism for 2014-2020 is carried out in two phases, the first from 2014 to 2016, focusing on the increase of arrivals in June and September, and the other from 2017 to 2020, dedicated to the May and October, in order to increase Croatian guests bases. To this purpose, three strategies focused on the expansion of the Croatian proposal values and offers in this period [11] were proposed, with the decisive role of tourist boards in developing PPS concept, which should be capable of acting on the principle of destination management organizations (DMOs), and of stimulating and integrating the interests of different subjects in the tourist value chain in the destination [12].

In the pilot project "Croatia 365", which was organized in the postseason in 2014 and with a total value of 4.8 million, were included 22 destinations, of which 7 continental, with the main activities carried out through offline and online advertising in key tourism markets, and through a web site of the Croatian National Tourist Board with the content based on 6 key tourism products [11,12].

### **Methods and Results of Primary Research**

As all of continental PPS destinations except the PPS destination "Plitvička jezera", according to the Regulations on the periods of season, pre-season, post-season and after-season in tourist municipalities and cities (NN 92/09, NN 146/13, NN 35/14), are classified in the category of the cities or municipalities where the main tourist season lasts the whole year, the primary goal of the research, conducted during the second half of July and early August 2015, was to establish the actual effects of measures undertaken within the project "Croatia 365" in the continental Croatian PPS destinations and to explore if possible increase in tourist traffic in those destinations during the period from 1 October 2014 to 31 March 2015 was a result of actions of the PPS destination management or of activities that have been undertaken at

the level of individual tourist municipalities and cities networked in the PPS destinations.

The research was conducted via a web survey, the answers to the questions were given by the representatives from six continental PPS destination (Daruvar-Bjelovar-Garešnica; Plitvička jezera; Srijem and Slavonija; Wine Tour of Slavonia and Baranja; Green Riviera; Green Heart of Croatia), while the representatives of the Tourist Board of Varazdin at which is the seat of PPS destination "Upper Medjimurje-Varazdin" refused to participate in the study. The research results are presented in the sequel.

Analysing responses to survey questions it was found that all of continental PPS destinations that participated in the pilot project "365 Croatian" stated the eno-gastronomy as one of the two possible key tourism products, according to the rules for the establishment and activities of destination PPS clubs, and that in all specified destinations western and central European tourist markets had the status of key markets.

Onwards, the largest number of members in the area, as many as 220 from 16 cities and municipalities and from the Region of Baranja, are registred in the PPS destination "Wine tour of Slavonia and Baranja", followed by the PPS destination "Srijem and Slavonia" with 103 networked members from the area of Vinkovci, Vukovar and Ilok; then PPS destination "Green Heart of Croatia" with 69 members from the area of Karlovac, Ozalj and Ribnik and PPS destination "Daruvar- Bjelovar-Garešnica" with 62 members from the area of Daruvar, Bjelovar and Garesnica.

Interesting are also the data related to the number of meetings held by the bodies of PPS clubs. In the largest PPS destination "Wine tour of Slavonia and Baranja", with the seat at the Tourist Office of Đakovo, during the time of the pilot project, there was no meeting of any body, as well as in the PPS destination "Plitvička jezera" which has the seat at the Tourist Office "Plitvička jezera". The largest number of meetings of the Coordination Committee as the governing body of PPS clubs, 5 of them, were held in the PPS destination "GreenRiviera" with the seat at the Tourist Board of Gornja i Donja Stubica; 4 meetings of the Coordination Committee were held in the PPS destination "Daruvar- Bjelovar-Garešnica" with the seat at the Tourist Board of Daruvar; 3 meetings in the PPS destination "Green Heart of Croatia" with the seat at the Tourist Board of Karlovac and one meeting in the PPS destination "Srijem and Slavonia" with the seat at the Tourist Board of Vinkovci.

Meetings of production teams as bodies with the base task to develop and improved destinations tourist offer were held in the PPS destination "Green Riviera"; "The Green Heart of Croatia" (4 meetings) and "Daruvar- Bjelovar-Garešnica" (2 meetings), while destination forums of PPS club members, which, according to the rules for the establishment and operation of destination PPS club members, have the main tasks to accept reports on the activities of the PPS club bodies and to discuss issues related to the development and improvement of the destinations offer, in time of the duration of the pilot project, were not held in any of the PPS destination.

All PPS destinations, executing the regular activities, prepared texts and pictures of tourist potentials of the PPS destinations for the web site of the Croatian National Tourist Board, while most of them, in cooperation with this institution, organized study trips and/or reception of journalists and travel agencies and informed the public about the work and activities of the PPS clubs. Half of the

respondents made the websites of the PPS destinations; conducted offline and online advertising of the PPS destinations, and organized a special presentation abroad. The PPS destinations "Wine tour of Slavonia and Baranja" and "Srijem and Slavonia" made PPS tags and provided technical assistance to the private sector on the occasion of their candidacy for the co-financing of projects by the Croatian National Tourist Board and/or the Ministry of Tourism, while the PPS destination "Wine tour Slavonia and Baranja, as well as the PPS destination "Green Heart of Croatia", created joint promotional materials and/or souvenirs. The PPS destination "Srijem and Slavonia", again with the PPS destination "Green Heart of Croatia", organized a special presentations outside the area of the PPS destination, in the country. Organization of events in time of the duration of the pilot project was task of the PPS destination "Daruvar-Bjelovar-Garešnica", as well as the PPS destination "Wine tour of Slavonia and Baranja," which, as only one and as part of the regular activities, carried out activities dealing with market research. Activities relating to the organization of educational workshops and performances at national and/or international fairs have not been carried out by any of the PPS destination.

When it comes to sources of financing activities, all PPS destination as one of the sources of activities financing stated the funds of the networked tourist boards, and the cities and municipalities - signatories of the agreement on cooperation in the project of the PPS concept "Croatia 365"; half of those financed activities from direct revenue of the Tourist Board at which is the seat of the PPS destination, while to the implementation of activities of the PPS destinations "The Green Riviera" and "The Green Heart of Croatia" was given the support provided from the members of the PPS clubs, as well as the Croatian Tourist Board. None of the surveyed PPS destinations as the source from which activities have been financed stated resources of Croatian ministries or donors.

When it comes to cooperation with the Department of the PPS destinations in the Head office, research revealed that 83.3% of the continental PPS destinations sometimes contacted the competent department (Figure 1), whereas, when it comes to the success of the project "Croatia 365" in the field of the PPS particular destination, half of the respondents gave the project a grade "good"; 33.3% of them an "insufficient", while one PPS destination graded cooperation with the Croatian Tourist Board with the mark "insufficient" (Figure 2).

Regarding tourist traffic in the area of the PPS destination in time of the duration of the pilot project, the results of the study showed that at the area of two (33.3%) PPS destinations, during the period from 1 October to 31 December 2014, there was an increase in tourist traffic to 7.0% (Figure 3), but not as a result of the activities that had been undertaken in the framework of the project "Croatia 365" (Figure 4), while the increase in tourist traffic in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2015, to 5%, was recorded in 3 (50%) PPS destinations (Figure 5), with only one (16.7%) PPS destination considering that the number of overnight stays in the area of destination was partly a result of activities undertaken in the framework of the project "Croatia 365" (Figure 6). Half of the respondents (50.0%) assessed the support of the Croatian Tourist Board to project implementation in the area of the individual PPS destinations with a grade "good", two PPS destinations (33.3%) with a grade "sufficient", and one (16.7%) with a grade "insufficient" (Figure 7). The concept of the project "Croatia 365" according to which destinations in the continental Croatia where, in accordance with applicable legislation, the tourist season lasts all year

round, also take part, was assessed with a grade "sufficient" by half of respondents; two destinations (33.3 %) evaluated the concept as "insufficient", and one (16.7%) as "excellent" (Figure 8).

## Discussion and Conclusions

Since the scientific and professional literature dealing with the tourism does not know the term "PPS destination", it is questionable to which extent is acceptable to use this term in the context of the program "Croatia 365", especially when talking of its application in the continental part of Croatia. Namely, the goal of this program is to get as better as possible tourist results in pre- and postseason, although

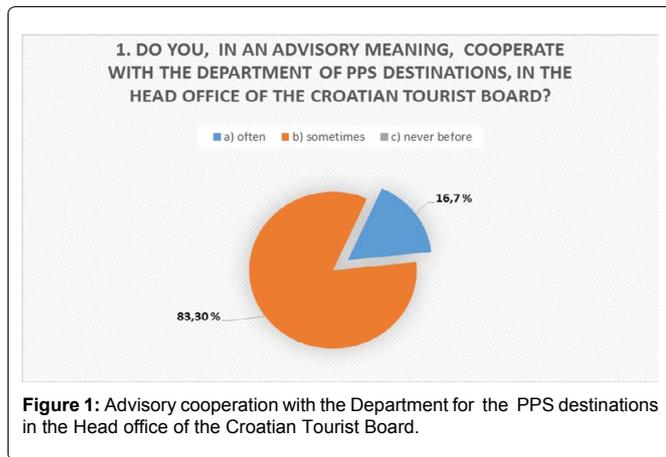


Figure 1: Advisory cooperation with the Department for the PPS destinations in the Head office of the Croatian Tourist Board.

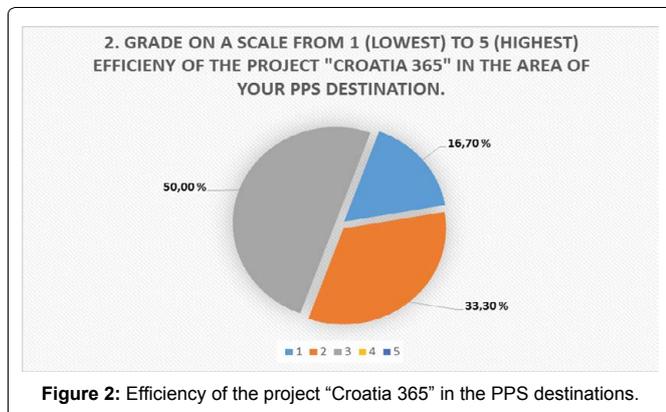


Figure 2: Efficiency of the project "Croatia 365" in the PPS destinations.

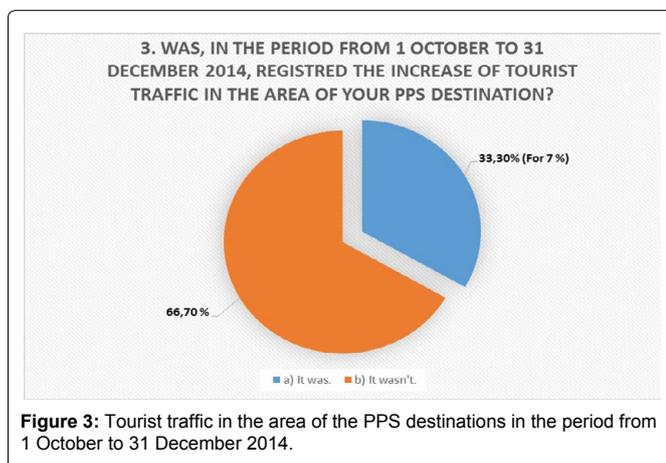


Figure 3: Tourist traffic in the area of the PPS destinations in the period from 1 October to 31 December 2014.

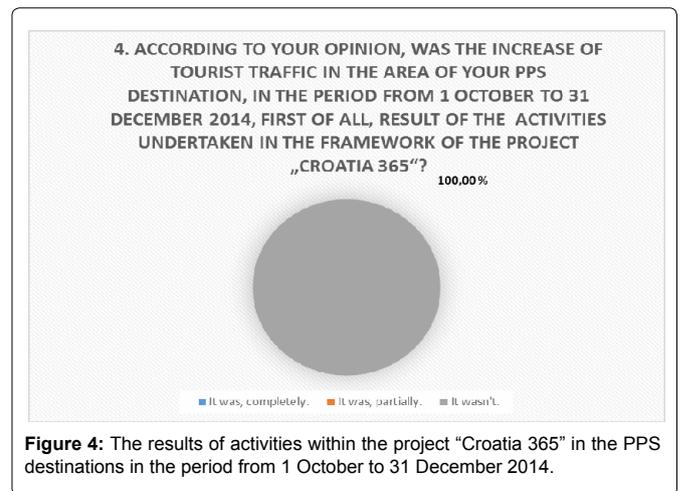


Figure 4: The results of activities within the project "Croatia 365" in the PPS destinations in the period from 1 October to 31 December 2014.

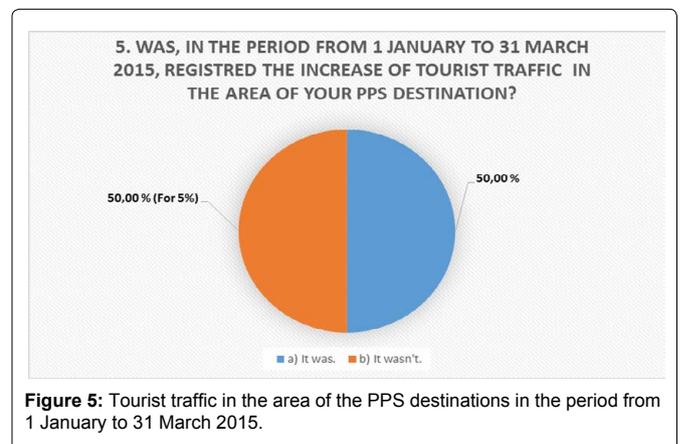


Figure 5: Tourist traffic in the area of the PPS destinations in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2015.

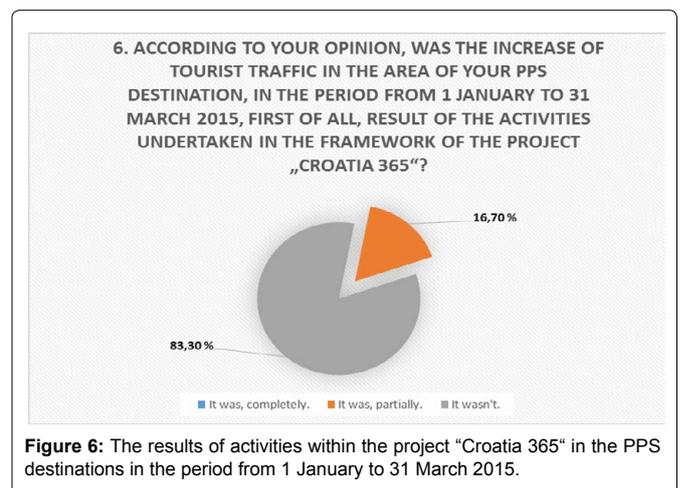
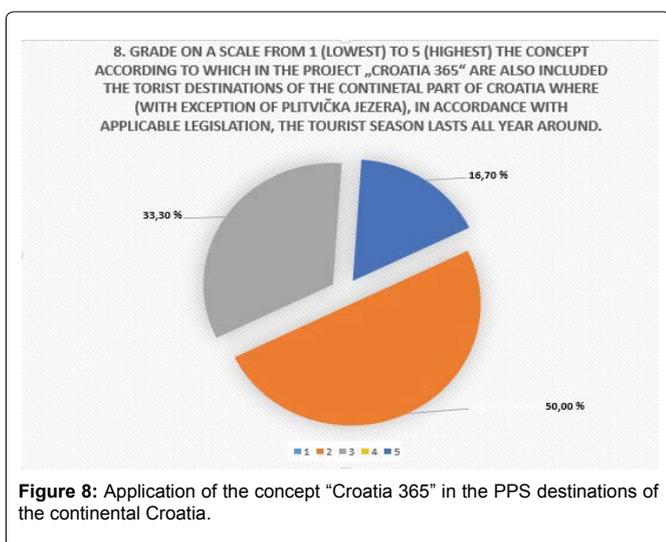
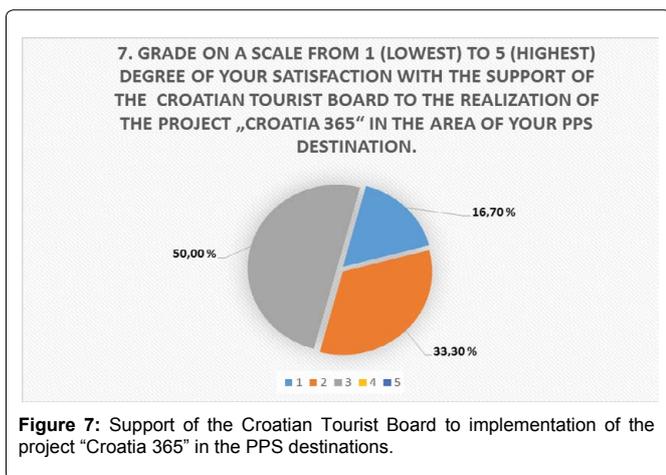


Figure 6: The results of activities within the project "Croatia 365" in the PPS destinations in the period from 1 January to 31 March 2015.

at the continent of Croatia, with exception of Plitvička jezera, tourist season lasts the whole year, so there is no pre- or postseason.

To make tourism development planning in certain tourist destinations more effective, at the national level it is necessary to provide adequate legal and institutional frameworks, but, in any case, the tourist destination development should be based on partnership and cooperation between public and private sector, without neglecting local people opinion.



Unfortunately, in Croatia there are not many examples of long-term, consistent, multi-sector partnerships for mutual development based on the cooperation of local authorities, associations, non governmental organizations and others, especially business stakeholders.

Although the commitment of the competent Ministry of Tourism and the Croatian Tourist Board for the implementation of PPS concept "Croatia 365" in the networked tourist destinations in the area of the coastal and continental Croatia can be evaluated as the extremely positive initiative, what is at stake is whether Croatia created an adequate legal and institutional frameworks for the effective operation of the PPS destinations, especially those inland, which are, in terms of tourism, largely undeveloped.

The Strategy for the Development of Tourism in 2020 as a development principle refers to the partnership, and the creation of conducive and transparent institutional framework tailored to measure companies [13], while in the Strategic Marketing Plan for Croatian Tourism for the period from 2014 to 2020 PPS strategies have been discussed in details (Croatian National Tourist Board, 2014, 167-192). Problem arises from the fact that neither in the currently valid Law on Tourism Boards and Promotion of Croatian Tourism [14], nor in the new Draft from June 2015, there are no provisions relating to the PPS concept and method of its application.

For the implementation of a plan to increase tourist traffic in the period of pre- and postseason, the Croatian Tourist Board, through the Work program and financial plan for 2015, planned funds in the amount of 6,680,000.00 HRK, with the largest share (41.92%) of funds intended for offline and online advertising that had started in the fall of 2014. Data from the conducted primary research shows that the majority of representatives of the continental PPS destinations which were included in a pilot project, and those in whose areas there has been an increase in tourist traffic during the 2014 postseason and preseason 2015, shares the view that the activities undertaken within the PPS concept did not give specific results, and that they did not aim at increasing tourist traffic in certain continental areas.

Disturbing is also the fact that none of the surveyed continental PPS destination, to the concept of "Croatia 365", when it comes to applying the same on its territory, has given a rate higher than "good", and that in any of the by research covered PPS destinations, for the duration of the pilot project, destination forums, which should have a key role in the development and improvement of supply PPS destination, have been held.

Conclusion which stems from this research is that the PPS concept, at least when it comes to the continental Croatia, is not coordinated with the provisions of the applicable Rules on the periods of season [15], preseason, postseason and afterseason in tourist municipalities and cities (NN 92/09, NN 146/ 13; NN 35/14), according to which in most of the continental Croatia tourist season lasts all year round. That is the reason why the program "Croatia 365" till now has not achieved good results.

Results of this study should help tourist boards in the continental part of Croatia in pointing out the Ministry of Tourism as well as the Croatian Tourist Board of the inefficiency of application of the program "Croatia 365" in continental, tourist undeveloped, areas and of proposing the measures to improve and enhance this program, aiming at getting better tourist results.

## References

- Djuric M, Djuric N (2010) Tourism Destination Marketing Management (Ed.): Tourism and Hospitality Management Industry 2010, New Trend in Tourism and Hospitality Management, Full Papers Proceeding, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Opatija 890-901.
- Hu Y, Ritchie JRB (1993) Measuring destination attractiveness: A contextual approach. *Journal of Travel Research* 32: 25-34.
- Buhalis D (2000) Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management* 21: 97-116.
- Magaš D (2010) Why The Destination Management Organization?(Ed.): Tourism and Hospitality Management Industry 2010, New Trend in Tourism and Hospitality Management, Full Papers Proceeding,, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija 1041-1047.
- Ružić D (2007) Marketing u turističkom ugostiteljstvu, Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, Osijek.
- Ministarstvo turizma (2015) Nacrt prijedloga zakona o turističkim zajednicama i promicanju hrvatskog turizma, Zagreb.
- Čavlek N, Bartoluci M, Kesar O, Čižmar S, Hendija Z (2010) Prilog novim odrednicama turističke politike u Hrvatskoj. *Acta Turistica* 22: 137- 160.
- Ministarstvo turizma (2015) Turizam u brojkama 2014. Zagreb.
- Bramwell B, Rawding L (1996) Tourism Marketing of Industrial Cities. *Annals of Tourism Research* 23: 201-221.
- Lončarić B (2012) Marketing u turizmu Slavonije i Baranje. Doktorska disertacija, Ekonomski fakultet u Osijeku, Osijek.

11. Hrvatska turistička zajednica (2014) Godišnji Program rada i financijski plan za 2015., Zagreb.
12. Hrvatska turistička zajednica (2014) Strateški marketinški plan hrvatskog turizma za razdoblje 2014.- 2020., Zagreb.
13. Ministarstvo turizma (2013) Strategija razvoja turizma RH do 2020., Zagreb.
14. Zakon o turističkim zajednicama i promicanju hrvatskog turizma (2008) Zagreb.
15. Ministarstvo turizma (2009) Pravilnik o razdobljima glavne sezone, predsezone, posezone i izvansezone u turističkim općinama i gradovima, Zagreb.

## Author Affiliation

[Top](#)

<sup>1</sup>Tourist Board Slavonski Brod, Slavonski Brod, Croatia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty Of Economics, JJ Strossmayer University Of Osijek, Osijek, Croatia

### Submit your next manuscript and get advantages of SciTechnol submissions

- ❖ 50 Journals
- ❖ 21 Day rapid review process
- ❖ 1000 Editorial team
- ❖ 2 Million readers
- ❖ Publication immediately after acceptance
- ❖ Quality and quick editorial, review processing

Submit your next manuscript at • [www.scitechnol.com/submission](http://www.scitechnol.com/submission)

This article was originally published in a special issue, **New Trends in Tourism Management** handled by Editor, Dr. Claudia Seabra, Polytechnic Institute of Viseu, Portugal.