

# PERSPECTIVES ON SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL TOURISM OF MAKARSKA AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

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***Abstract:** Makarska as an attractive tourist destination due to the mass and seasonal nature of tourism is faced with a number of problems that are reflected in its competitiveness in the international tourism market and through the quality of life of the local population. This area has a great potential for expanding its tourist offer. Planned development and management open up opportunities for overcoming the orientation towards mass and seasonal tourism and the untapped potential of all other areas. The development of sports and recreational tourism and a well-designed strategy of communication with the public can contribute to the improvement of the tourist offer of this region, which would have a direct impact on reducing the seasonality and prolonging the tourist season.*

***Keywords:** sports and recreational tourism, communication, development, competitiveness*

## INTRODUCTION

The attractiveness of a tourist destination has a special importance for the development of tourism. The author Bornhost et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of a tourist destination, defining it as a geographical region, a political jurisdiction, i.e. a major attraction that seeks to provide visitors with extensive experiences worth remembering.

The presence of tourist resources in an interesting area is crucial for the development of tourism (Sava and Pinteala, 2016). Makarska littoral as a tourist region, which attracts more and more tourists every year, does not sufficiently use its natural and cultural values, and relies only on seasonal tourism. The city is a tourist center with many hotels, villas and boarding houses, quality and diverse restaurants, rich entertainment, sports and cultural facilities. Makarska is one of the most famous tourist destinations on the Croatian coast due to its natural and climatic characteristics and

diverse tourist offer. However, this area is characterized by a massive and seasonal character of tourism, which limits the possibilities for expanding the season and more attractive development.

The uncontrolled and poorly managed development of tourism in coastal tourist destinations entails a number of negative consequences, one of which is the loss of competitiveness and international market position. Makarska and its surroundings have great potential for expanding their tourist offer. This indicates the need to develop a strategic plan for the development of Makarska as a tourist destination, and it is important to take care of sustainable development so that it doesn't lead to excessive depletion of resources and other problems in the future.

Sports and recreational tourism is a form of tourism based on active and meaningful holidays characterized by sports and entertainment activities, such as walking, cycling, swimming, rowing, various team sports etc. Interest in this type of tourism has been constantly growing recently because tourists, in addition to passive vacation, also want to spend part of their free time actively (Demonja & Ružić, 2010).

Thanks to its tourist-geographical position and favorable climatic conditions, the Makarska Riviera is an area that is advantageous for sports and recreational tourism. In Makarska, as a tourist destination, there is seasonal tourism, which is expressed during the summer months. The biggest advantage of this area, for the development of sports and recreational tourism, are the natural attractions that are most reflected in the proximity of mountains and the sea. Therefore, the subject of this paper is the current tourist situation, i.e. available resources that have the potential for the development of sports and recreational tourism in order to achieve sustainable tourism development and positive economic effects.

It is obvious that the sports and recreational needs that arise as a result of modern ways of working and living, strongly influence the demand for sports and recreational services in tourism. It is also an incentive for the development of sports and recreational content in tourism (Bartoluci et al., 2007).

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOURIST DESTINATION MAKARSKA**

In the modern world, most traveling involves some form of recreation and people are increasingly turning to active vacation instead of passive as before. The desire for new experiences, adventures and adrenaline are one of the main causes of the growing representation of sports and recreational tourism. Almost every tourism is also a kind of recreation, although not every

recreation is tourism. There is winter and summer sport-recreational tourism, and it refers to the place where the activities take place. Precisely from the previous two functions; sports and recreation, the sports tourism is developing.

When observing the reasons for the tourist arrivals of individuals in Makarska and the Makarska Riviera, sports and recreational facilities are at the bottom of the motive. Approximately only 15% of tourists cite sports and recreation as the primary reason for arrival, while motives such as natural attractions (with the largest share), passive vacation, gastronomic offer, culture and entertainment are ahead of sports and recreation according to the main motives of arrival.

Today, tourism affects all segments of the life of local communities: housing, employment, landscaping, infrastructure, cultural events, etc. At the local level, although mass tourism improves the life of the community in various ways, it also brings with it some negative consequences associated with mismanagement.

Also, the problem of mass construction of housing for primary housing is a distinct problem that this area is facing, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. Often without quality urban planning, and often without building permits, large concreting (shores, promenades, yards etc.) destroys the landscape and permanently degrades the space as a whole, and reduces its ecological and economic value (Stančić & Škarica, 2002).

One of the negative effects of rapid tourism development is the loss of identity of local communities that agree to various compromises on their traditions and culture by imposing customs and lifestyles aimed at meeting the needs of tourists, especially when it comes to the international market, which is partly the case on the Makarska Riviera. Also, the danger of further development of tourism is threatened due to the excessive focus exclusively on seasonal tourism, which makes this area economically vulnerable. The relatively short season with a concentration of guests on the summer months, especially out of season, requires serious consideration of how to use this coastal area for a more diverse offer and tourism that will attract tourists throughout the whole year. (Podgorelec & Klempić, 2002).

Makarska occupies a central position in the Makarska coast and is the second largest city in central Dalmatia (after Split). The term Makarska Riviera has recently been increasingly used for the Makarska coast (<https://sites.google.com>).

An important and very attractive resource is the mountain Bikovo within the Nature Park, which extends along the entire Makarska Riviera, as the

greatest potential for further development. The hiking season on Biokovo starts at the end of April and lasts until the end of October (Ozimec, 2008).

The most important and strongest natural resource of Makarska is the Adriatic Sea, as a hydrographic natural resource that provides a number of opportunities for tourist activities. The main sub-resource of the sea are beaches as a part of the tourist infrastructure. Much of the tourist offer of the Republic of Croatia is a tourist product related to the sun and the sea, i.e. bathing tourism for the valorization of which it is necessary to ensure a quality offer of beach space.

The main organic tourist resources of the City of Makarska are natural forests, Mediterranean vegetation and marine biocenosis. According to some experts, in the coming time, forests will be of the greatest importance in global tourism trends, both due to their general biogeographical features and the possibility of arranging picnic areas, organizing hunting tourism, field trips and more. Forests play a major role in the development of tourism due to the numerous and intertwined social, economic and environmental functions, and this value is recognized in Croatian legislation.

Makarska is very rich in the context of social resources such as monuments, galleries, squares, churches etc. Of the sacral buildings from the period after the baptism, the Early Romanesque churches stand out in terms of number, mostly dating from the period from the 11th until 13th century. According to the latest spatial plans of the administrative units of the Makarska littoral, thirty-one Roman Catholic churches and two chapels are protected as cultural property, and most of the buildings are located in the northwestern part of the Makarska Riviera.

## **POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL TOURISM**

Tourist destinations attract attention because they encourage and motivate the movement of tourists and represent the areas that create the majority of the tourist product (Petrović et al, 2020). Destinations have a large share in the overall tourism economy and show most of the positive and negative effects of tourism development (Popescu, 2016).

Makarska can boast of a very good offer of content and services in the context of sports and recreational tourism and is very well kept up with market trends. People increasingly want to spend their free time actively and are looking for destinations where, in addition to vacation, they will also have an offer of adventurous and sports content in order to use their time in the best possible way.

A strong potential for the development of various forms of sports and recreational tourism is the mountain Biokovo. One of the ways to use your strengths and advantages is to study well and analyze those destinations that have managed to extend their tourist season by developing these activities.

Light or "soft" activities are not so popular or developed and the focus should be on them because they are just as attractive and interesting as more difficult activities, especially for recreational users.

Some of these activities are already under consideration and plans, so it is very likely that they will be realized in the future, so Makarska will enrich the already diverse offer of sports and recreational activities and content and create even better competitive advantage and recognition and attract more tourists. Sport is very suitable for development, so the development of sports tourism can contribute to the extension of the tourist season, as well as an increase in non-board consumption.

The current problem in tourism on the Makarska Riviera is the short duration of the tourist season as well as the dependence on weather conditions. The development of sports and recreational forms of tourism represents a strong potential for the further development of tourism on the Makarska Riviera, as well as the need to extend the tourist season. This form of tourism is more resistant to weather conditions than other types of tourism, and sometimes even requires worse weather conditions due to additional adventure. It can certainly contribute to the quality of life through a large number of activities that the local population will be able to engage in outside the summer months, which should contribute to the quality of life on the Makarska Riviera. The advantages that should be emphasized on the Makarska Riviera as a destination are its opposites that make it a unique tourist destination.

The development of a tourism product alone will not have such a strong effect without the support of other elements of the marketing mix. Through the development of sports and recreational tourism, tourism activity can be expanded, which leads to a direct increase in the quality of life in the destination. Tourism is no longer just swimming and the sea, it is important that something new can always be offered to guests. The basis of the strategy of market positioning of a tourist destination is its total offer, i.e. tourist product. The position of tourist destinations is most often based on the tourist product, and not on promotion and general image. (Jovanov & Popescu, 2010).

The role of tourist organizations and institutions, the local community or the state is needed to create a sports and recreational offer. There is no unique model for the development of sports and recreational tourism that

would be applicable because they depend primarily on the natural and geographical characteristics of a particular area. The Split-Dalmatia County has all the predispositions for the further development of this form of tourism, which should be strategically presented to the target public.

As a specific form of communication, public relations find special application in tourism. It is a communication model whose one of the main purposes is to create a recognizable image in the public. This purposefulness in tourism is extremely important, especially when it comes to creating a positive image of a particular destination (Jakovljević, 2011: 120-121). Public relations is a form of business communication aimed at developing, maintaining and improving good business relations between companies and many interest groups. Public relations marketing, as a support to other marketing communication tools through building consumer relations, can be used to launch new products.

The goals of public relations in the development of the tourist offer and the affirmation of sports and recreational tourism should be focused on managing important issues, providing a favorable environment for business activities (government relations, NGO relations, socially responsible business), providing funds for business and favorable climate for investment (investor relations), contribution to marketing activities (creation of positive publicity by various media relations tools, through creation and realization of events and similar activities). Through planned public relations activities, inform the target groups about the diverse sports and recreational offer, which will enrich the existing tourist offer and create opportunities for creating a new product, recognizable for this region.

## CONCLUSION

Although it is in step with the trends and has a development policy in the form of sports and recreational tourism, the area of Makarska has additional opportunities for further development and the creation of a richer offer and content. The surrounding areas of Makarska have great potential for development through sports and recreational tourism, which would "revive" these areas through its facilities and services. Such an expansion trend is recorded in many European regions, and it is unquestionable that Makarska will continue its efficient policy and keep pace with the modern world.

If certain problems were eliminated, that would affect the level of competitiveness of this region, especially in the international tourist market. In that way, there would be greater economic effects and it would contribute

to raising the level of well-being of the local population, which is one of the main goals of tourism development in any destination. Through the planned communication, establish quality public relations, and present a richer tourist offer to both local and wider public. In brand strengthening activities, i.e. Makarska's tourist offer use various techniques and skills, especially those of proven marketing, where public relations are becoming increasingly important as a much more subtle but also effective form of communication. The goals and effects of public relations are long-term and related to the creation of a positive image of a particular destination, through the recognizability of the Makarska region for its diverse and rich sports and recreational tourist offer.

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