Full Length Research Paper

Event management and consumer satisfaction in tourism industry

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During the last decade of the 20th century, there has been an evidence of intensive growth of the economic role and importance of events within developed countries and transition countries economies. The economic role and importance of events might be achieved only if the planning, staging and taking place of the events are well managed. The economic importance of events brought about the competition between festivals and the need to analyse factors affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty within the customer attraction strategy. This study represents the results of a questionnaire research conducted during the 50th anniversary of brass bands music festival in Guca (The Republic of Serbia) in August 2010. The results were based on 300 questionnaires sheets distributed. The research is aimed at establishing the model for analyzing the factors affecting customer satisfaction with the event. The factor analysis generated six factors: "Traffic and information", "hygiene and safety", "culture and art", "socialization", "infrastructure", "products and services". Using an importance-performance analysis (IPA), this paper examined visitors' perceived importance and performance of remote factors.

Key words: Event management, festivals, consumer satisfaction, importance-performance analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Today, events are central issue within our culture perhaps as never before. Governments now support and promote events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and destination marketing (Bowdin et al., 2006). The events are considered a special economic offer, different from both tangible products and non-material services. With regard to economics, the event certainly is a market offer in the process of exchange with the aim of fulfilling specific, heterogeneous and non-material consumer needs. The attractiveness of an event emerges from its specific and original offer, uniqueness and time restriction, which differs the events from products and services. Specifically designed basic idea is linked to recognisable atmosphere and ambience that surpass ordinary economic offer for the customers (visitors). Contemporary offer of events incorporates various services for broadening and completing the event programme. With regard to the quality of service, the event visitors accommodate certain expectations and demands (Andrejevic and Grubor, 2007).

Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events within tourism have been well documented, and are of increasing importance for destination competitiveness. Yet it was only a few decades ago that 'event tourism' became established in both the tourism industry and in the research community, so that subsequent growth of this sector can only be described as spectacular. Equally, 'event management' is a fast growing professional field in which tourists constitute a potential market for planned events and the tourism industry has become a vital stakeholder in their success and attractiveness (Getz, 2008).

According to the research of Tourism Organisation of Serbia (TOS), the primary motives of foreign tourists

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arriving to Serbia are the events. That is why event based tourism was implemented in "tourism development strategy" in 2005 both as a significant segment of tourism development in Serbia and competitive advantage of domestic tourism (Tourism development strategy, 2005). One of the most renowned and most visited events in Serbia is Assembly of Trumpet Players in Guca. Guca is a small town in Lucani municipality, the whole area known as Dragacevo, a micro region in western Serbia.

Dragacevo assembly or brass bands festival in Guca is a unique competition of folk brass bands in the world and one of the most important events of the overall national creativity and cultural amateurism in Serbia. The festival is held each year in the first half of August (the first festival was held in 1961), and the latest one (in 2010) lasted for ten days celebrating its 50th anniversary. During the period of five decades of the Festival, together with festival competitors, the guests started to arrive: orchestras, cultural societies, singing groups, soloists, painters etc, from various parts of Serbia, former Yugoslav republics, and since the mid-eighties also from around the world (Tadić et al., 2010). During 50 years of its tradition, this cultural and tourism event has been visited by about eight million people (Babić, 2004; Marinković et al., 2006).

Festival is the overall review of national spirituality including art exhibitions, literary meetings, competition of toast-proposers, all-round national sport tournaments, competition for the most beautiful national costumes, performances of folk customs (for instance: Dragacevo's wedding ceremony from the 19th century), brass bands concerts, concerts of singers, dancers (Gavrilović, 2004; Gavrilović 2009). The authentic and indigenous dances and other folk inspired elements, coupled with music of orchestras on the stage have become an integral part of national gathering. The virtuoso music performers, the trumpeters are for the most part fully self-taught. The Guca brass bands music festival (also known as Dragacevo Assembly) continues to grow year after year. Today, this musical feast of recognizable national skills is growing more popular, more diverse and bigger than ever before (Tadić et al., 2010). With considerable experience in organizing festivals, today the traditionally hospitable Guca has earned its place on the map of world music festivals, attracting high interest from ethno music lovers.

The aim of this scientifically based research is to examine basic principles of event management by using appropriate scientific and professional literature; and also to examine the reliability of the model for measurement of consumer satisfaction in tourism (event visitors) by means of statistical methods application.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer satisfaction is one of the essential components of any organization's strategies, as the customer is the ultimate source of income for any industry. Therefore, many researchers consider customer satisfaction to be the best indicator of a company's future profit. Satisfaction surveys are one of the most essential tools that are used in gathering information about tourist opinions of a destination (Alegre and Garau, 2010). Satisfaction refers to the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and perceived performance after consumption – when performance differs from expectation, dissatisfaction occurs (Oliver, 1980; Chen and Chen, 2010). It can be defined as the degree to which one believes that an experience evokes positive feelings (Rust and Oliver, 1994).

In tourism context, satisfaction is primarily referred to as a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. Travel satisfaction has been generally used as an assessment tool for the evaluation of travel experiences (Bramwell, 1998; Ross and Iso-Ahola, 1991). Customer satisfaction is often used to predict the likelihood of customers returning (Kim et al., 2009). Tourists' positive experiences of service, products, and other resources provided by tourism destinations could produce repeat visits as well as positive word-of-mouth effects to potential tourists such as friends and/or relatives (Bramwell, 1998; Oppermann, 2000; Postma and Jenkins, 1997). Recommendations by previous visits can be taken as the most reliable information sources for potential tourists. Recommendations to other people (word-of-mouth) are one of the most often sought types of information for people interested in travelling. This systematic examination of causal relationships among the constructs could facilitate a clearer understanding of the nature of behaviour and intentions. Even if the constructs have been widely applied in studies related to tourists, there are still research challenges in the sense of discovering and investigating the causal relationships among the constructs of push and pull motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Ostrom and Iacobucci (1995) believed that customer satisfaction could measure the difference between customer's expectations and perceived value of a product or service that is product price, service efficiency, service attendant's attitude, the overall performance of the company and the expected intimacy regarding the company. Jones and Sasser (1995) considered the customer's desire for repurchase, basic behaviour (the latest purchase time, quantity and amount) and derivative behaviours (public recommendation, praise and customer introduction) as the factors to measure customer satisfaction.

Homburg et al. (2006) mentioned that "customer satisfaction" has been an important term in the marketing literature over the decades because satisfied customers are able to acquire long term benefits such as customer loyalty and continuous profitability for enterprises. Customer satisfaction is observed in the fact that customers can get far more benefits than costs (e.g. money,

time and effort). There have been numerous attempts to create models of service quality and customer satisfaction. One model is the SERVQUAL model originally developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988). The SERVQUAL model has been widely applied in measuring customer satisfaction in different ranges of service categories. Model for measuring customer satisfaction used in this study, is the result of detailed analysis of previously literature, while the base for its formation, as in many previous investigations, was the SERVQUAL model.

METHODOLOGY

Research instrument

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 30 items. These 30 attributes were identified based on a review of relevant literature and two focus group discussions. The two identified groups were: academic staff of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management and members of tourist organisations. Members of the two groups were asked to rate each of the 30 attributes on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 - extremely important to 1 - extremely unimportant. After a careful screening analysis and advice from academic professionals, 26 of the 30 attributes were selected.

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study, consisting of 55 festival visitors of various nationalities, was done. Three items ("other visitors of the event behave appropriately", "the event venue is spacious enough to host large number of visitors", "the noise of performers and visitors are not disturbing") were deleted from the survey instrument due to their low factor loading scores. Then, a formal survey with 23 items was conducted.

The questionnaire used in this research consists of three parts. The first part of questionnaire consisted of 23 items, for which visitors were asked to indicate the perceived importance of the attributes that affect the satisfaction with the tourism experience of the festival visitors, while the second part consisted of a serial of 23 questions whose aim was to examine their satisfaction with the festival. Attributes were measured by a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1, least important to 5, most important, in the importance part, and from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree, in the performance part. The third part of the questionnaire included respondents' demographic information.

Data collection

The research was conducted in Guca, the largest settlement in Lucani municipality, the western part of the Republic of Serbia (the Balkans, South Eastern Europe) where the 50th anniversary of brass bands festival was held from 13th to 22nd August 2010. Pilot survey was conducted on the first two days (13th and 14th August 2010) and a formal survey lasted for five days (from 18th to 22nd August 2010). The research was conducted in restaurants, accommodation facilities and camping sites. In total, 450 questionnaire sheets were distributed and 300 (66.67%) usable questionnaire sheets were obtained.

RESULTS

Characteristics of respondents

The sample included 155 (51.7%) males and 145(48.3%)

females among the respondents. The main age group was 21 to 30 and represented 41.3% of the respondents.

The next biggest age groups were 31 to 40 and 51 to 60 making the 18% of the respondents. Most of the respondents (60.3%) had completed secondary education. Regarding their occupation, the majority of respondents are either employed (44.7%) or students (33.7%). According to their monthly income, the dominance of the group of the respondents with low income, up to € 200 (40%) and between 201 and € 400 (32.7%), was recorded. Observed by the country of origin, the largest number of respondents arrived from Serbia (70.7%), whereas the share of the respondents from other European countries was 29.3% (Table 1).

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical technique that is concerned with the identification of structure within a set of observed variables. Its appropriate use involves the study of interrelationships among variables in an effort to find a new set of variables (Stewart, 1981).

The attribute importance data were factor analyzed using the principal component method and varimax rotation procedure in order to extract the sub-dimensions of those attributes. In this study, all factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 and with factor loadings more than 0.5 were retained.

The results of the factor analysis, which suggested a six - factor solution, included 23 attributes and explained 65,66 % of the variance. The Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin (KMO) overall measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82 which was meritorious (Kaiser, 1974) and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p = 0.000$). The results of the factor analysis produced a clean factor structure with relatively higher loadings on the appropriate factors. Cronbach's α values for each factor were greater than 0.7. The results showed that the Alpha coefficients of the six factors ranged from 0.76 to 0.87. This demonstrates that the scales of the formal questionnaire have considerable reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Table 2 shows the results of the factor analysis.

The first factor was labelled "Traffic and information". This factor explained 12.497% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The second factor was "Hygiene and safety" explaining 12.379% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. The third factor was labelled "culture and art" and explained 11.869% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The fourth factor, labelled "Socialization" accounted for 11.838% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. The fifth factor, "Infrastructure" explained 8.933 % of the total variance, indicating a reliability coefficient of 0.84. The last factor, "Products and services" explained 8.138% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.76.

Table 1. Demographic information of visitors (n = 300).

Variable	Sample size	Percent
Age		
≤ 20	25	8.3
21 - 30	124	41.3
31 - 40	54	18.0
41 - 50	29	9.7
51 - 60	54	18.0
≥ 61	14	4.7
Gender		
Male	155	51.7
Female	145	48.3
Education		
primary education	9	3.0
secondary education	181	60.3
higher education	74	24.7
Master's degree	31	10.3
Doctor's degree	5	1.7
Occupation		
pupil	20	6.7
student	101	33.7
employed	134	44.7
retired	23	7.7
unemployed	18	6.0
Other	4	1.3
Average income		
≤ € 200	120	40.0
€ 201 – 400	98	32.7
€ 401 – 600	39	13.0
€ 601 – 1000	29	9.7
€ 1001 – 2000	11	3.7
≥ 2001 €	3	1.0
Place of residence		
Republic of Serbia	212	70.7
other European countries	88	29.3

Research on visitors' satisfaction with the event by application of an importance- performance analysis (IPA)

The opinion of the visitors is important for evaluation of the life cycle of the event, since events, similarly to other tourism product, undergo fluctuation periods, that is, ups and downs. Innovations in programmes and continuous quality improvement of the total services during the event contribute to longer periods of attractiveness and well positioning of the venue destination (Hadžić and Bjeljac,

2006). Most frequently used managerial method in researches on visitors' satisfaction with the quality of tourism experience is the method consisting of the analysis of the matrix importance- performance analysis (IPA). It was first introduced by Martilla and James (1977) to identify which product or service attributes should be in the focus to enhance customer satisfaction (Matzler et al., 2004). Such technique identifies strengths and weaknesses of a market offer with regard to two criteria used by the consumers while selecting destinations. One criterion is the relative importance of attributes. The other is consumers' evaluation of the offer in terms of those attributes (Kitcharoen. 2004). The IPA framework has gained popularity among researchers in tourism (Evans and Chon, 1989; Duke and Persia, 1996; Wade and Eagles, 2003; Hadžić and Bjeljac, 2006; hotel industry (Almanza, 1994; Hemmasi et al., 1994; Martin, 1995; Chu and Choi, 2000), restaurant business (Keyt et al., 1994; Hsu et al., 1997) and other services or production activities.

The Y-axis shows the visitors' perceived importance of specific attributes while the X-axis reflects the service's performance with regard to these attributes. The four quadrants recognized are as follows: Concentrate Here, Keep up the Good Work, Low Priority and Possible Overkill. In the quadrant called concentrate, respondents described attributes as very important. However, performance levels are seen as rather low. This sends quite a clear message that improvement efforts should concentrate here. In the Keep up the Good Work quadrant, respondents described attributes as very important while at the same time, the organization seems to have high levels of performance in relation to these activities. In the Low Priority quadrant, attributes have both low importance and low performance. Although performance levels are low in this cell, managers do not have to worry since the attributes in this cell are not recognized as very important. Limited resources should be expended on this "low priority" cell. Finally, the Possible Overkill quadrant contains attributes of low importance and of relatively high performance. Respondents are satisfied with the performance of the organizations, but managers should consider their efforts on the attributes of this cell as being overexploited (Chu and Choi, 2000).

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the six factors and their retaining items for visitors in relation to Importance and Performance. The data was then transferred to the IPA grid presentation.

In Figure 1 the X-axis represents the perception of performance scores relaying to visitor's experience of festival. The Y-axis represents relative importance that six importance factors had to the tourists. The mean Importance rating for the pooled data was 4.35 while the mean performance rating was 3.37. The four quadrants are constructed based on the mean scores of the importance and performance ratings.

Highly important factor for the event visitors'

Table 2. Results of factor analysis.

Extracted factor	Item	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	Cronbach's α
F1 – Traffic and information	Good quality and safe approach routes	0.692	8.253	12.497	0.82
	Easy access to designated parking spaces.	0.731			
	The event venue is not over crowded	0.759			
	Provision of valuable information on destination and the surroundings.	0.655			
F2 – Hygiene and safety	Good hygiene of the venue.	0.644	2.702	12.379	0.83
	High level of visitors' safety.	0.739			
	High quality level of food and beverage hygiene.	0.800			
	Well-organized medical services.	0.832			
F3 – Culture and Art	Varied and broad programme of the event.	0.702	2.073	11.869	0.82
	Enough participants in the competition.	0.670			
	High quality musicians and performers.	0.655			
	Event largely contributes to meeting the local customs.	0.757			
	Event is crucial for being introduced to the local culture.	0.787			
F4 - Socialization	Local people are friendly.	0.644	1.675	11.838	0.87
	High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from Serbia.	0.776			
	High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from other countries in the region (former Yugoslav republics).	0.894			
	High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from other European countries and the world.	0.894			
F5 – Infrastructure	Excellent infrastructure provision of the town (roads, sign posts, platforms, green areas)	0.747	1.266	8.933	0.84
	Excellent infrastructure provision of the venue (enough sanitary facilities, benches, shops).	0.579			
	Variety of additional facilities for children and adults.	0.730			
F6 – Products and services	Reasonable prices of products and services (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs).	0.712	1.100	8.138	0.76
	Extraordinary quality of products and services (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs).	0.675			
	Broad selection of products (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs).	0.699			

satisfaction, "Culture and Art" is positioned in the quadrant "Keep up the Good Work". Moreover, there is satisfying respondents' perception of this factor, that is, the content and quality of the programme and its importance for meeting the local culture and tradition are rather high. In the quadrant called "possible overkill" there is the factor "socialization", regarded as not highly important by the tourists, but satisfactory in terms

Table 3. Mean ratings of importance and performance of selection factors and items.

Factor and item	Importance		Performance	
	Mean	**Std. dev.**	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**
F1 – Traffic and information	4.31	0.81	3.08	0.82
Good quality and safe approach routes	4.42	0.96	3.17	0.97
Easy access to designated parking spaces	4.38	0.92	3.15	1.05
The event venue is not over crowded	4.31	1.05	3.05	1.20
Provision of valuable information on destination and the surroundings	4.13	1.11	2.95	1.17
F2 – Hygiene and safety	4.66	0.57	3.22	0.83
Good hygiene of the venue	4.70	0.64	2.52	1.25
High level of visitors' safety	4.54	0.84	3.61	1.09
High quality level of food and beverage hygiene	4.73	0.62	3.25	1.11
Well-organized medical services	4.68	0.71	3.50	1.06
F3 – Culture and art	4.45	0.60	3.95	0.83
Varied and broad programme of the event	4.49	0.77	3.96	1.00
Enough participants in the competition	4.47	0.79	4.03	1.03
High quality musicians and performers	4.60	0.66	4.24	0.95
Event largely contributes to meeting the local customs	4.40	0.80	3.72	1.21
Event is crucial for being introduced to the local culture	4.31	0.88	3.80	1.17
F4 - Socialization	4.21	0.85	3.82	0.94
Local people are friendly.	4.48	0.80	3.92	1.21
High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from Serbia	4.25	0.97	3.87	1.20
High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from other countries in the region (former Yugoslav republics)	4,08	1,09	3.81	1.19
High possibility of friendly contacts with the visitors from other European countries and the world	4.01	1.11	3.69	1.23
F5 – Infrastructure	4.10	0.89	2.99	0.84
Excellent infrastructure provision of the town (roads, sign posts, platforms, green areas)	4.17	1.01	3.02	1.07
Excellent infrastructure provision of the venue (enough sanitary facilities, benches, shops)	4.23	0.99	2.91	1.18
Variety of additional facilities for children and adults	3.89	1.05	3.02	0.93
F6 – Products and services	4.40	0.72	3,18	0.93
Reasonable prices of products and services (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs)	4.42	0.91	3.14	1.18
Extraordinary quality of products and services (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs)	4.45	0.75	3.15	1.08
Broad selection of products (accommodation, food, drinks, souvenirs)	4.32	0.97	3.25	1.15

of its performance. In the quadrant called "low priority" there are factors "traffic and information" and "Infrastructure" perceived by the visitors as important, but of dissatisfying performance level. However, the perceived performance grade for both factors is lower compared to other factors. In the quadrant "concentrate here", there are two factors perceived by the tourists as the most important, but feel dissatisfied by their performance. The factors are "hygiene and safety" and "products and services".

Conclusion

Event management has shown that management is a complex function in practice. It is a process of 'commands'
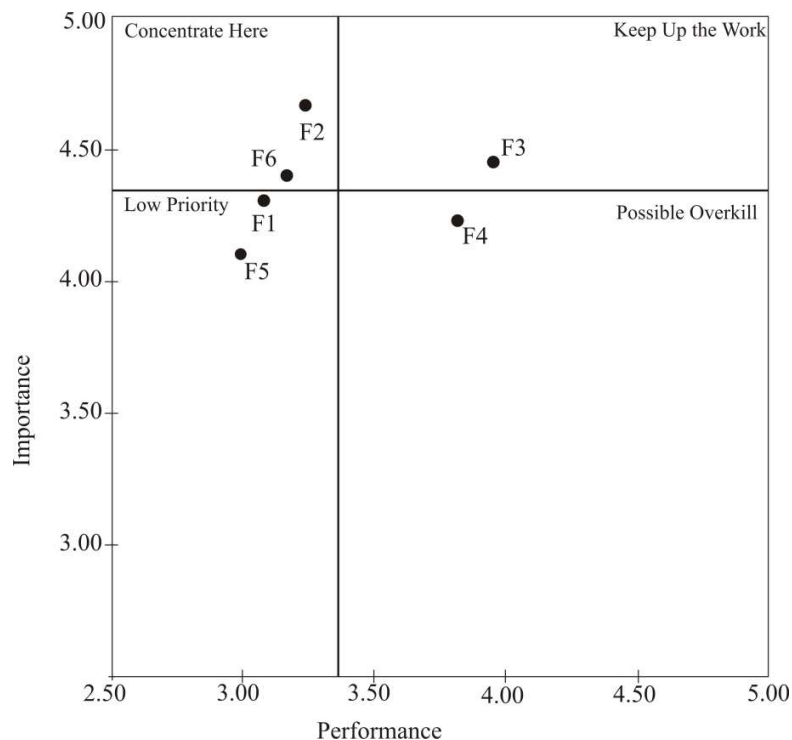
Figure 1. Importance-Performance Analysis grid. F1 - " Traffic and information ", F2 - "Hygiene and safety", F3 - " Culture and art ", F4 - "Socialization", F5 - "Infrastructure", F6 - "Products and services".

and influences on associates and executives with the aim of achieving the goals of the event. The events should offer supposed benefits for the local community that may be visible in social and cultural intentions, social interaction and cultural development of the community, affirmation of mutual goals, building the social and cultural identity of the community and its recognisable image (Andrejevic and Grubor, 2007).

A primary concern of an event manager or host organization is whether an event is within planned budget and, hopefully, results in a surplus or profit. One of the most important impacts is the tourism revenue generated by an event. In addition to their spending at the event, external visitors are likely to spend money on travel, accommodation, goods and services in the host city or region. This expenditure can have a considerable impact as it circulates through the local economy (Bowdin et al., 2006).

Satisfaction, from a customer point of view, is a personal feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that come over as a result of comparison between perceived performance of the tourist product (event) and expectations. Whether a customer feels satisfied after the purchase of services or products, depends on the fact to what extent the offer meets his expectations (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Regarding the fact that it is the visitors who breathe some life into the company (Webster, 1994), the

visitors' satisfaction from the point of view of event organisation is the key for achieving business success and the basic goal of its activities.

The research is aimed at establishing the model for analyzing the factors affecting customer satisfaction with the event. The factor analysis generated six factors: "traffic and information", "hygiene and safety", "culture and art", "socialization", "infrastructure", "products and services". Using IPA, this study has compared the importance and performance of the factors, as perceived by the event visitors. Importance-performance analysis implies that event management should highlight the elements determined by factors "hygiene and safety" and "products and services", located in the quadrant "con-centrate here". For instance, the organiser of the festival should pay more attention to "hygiene and safety", since the local population is 2,022 (according to census data in 2002) and the number increases several times during the event (for about 250 times). It indicates that there is the need to improve the sanitary and hygiene condition in camps, near the concert stages and other locations.

The basic tasks of management in this case are to build strong relationships with guests; to monitor changes in consumers' demands and to maintain service standards that reflect identified customers' demands. With the aim of achieving positive social and cultural impacts of events on the surroundings, it is necessary to

efficiently and effectively manage the events in order to avoid digressions from the predefined programme during its realisation, that is, to prevent poor public opinion on the realised programme of the events. Poorly managed events have deep negative social, cultural and political impact on both closer and broader surroundings.

Both local authorities in Guča and Dragačevo County and the organisers of the festival should improve the tourist offer and overall services during the event, to facilitate raising the competitiveness and quality of the destination to a higher level. Similarly, stronger cooperation and communication with the locals should be achieved through organisation of public discussions, workshops and consultations that would aid the local population to create unique and well-designed tourist product that would be competitive at the tourist market. Finally, the education that would highlight, by means of case studies, for the organisers, participants and visitors of the Dragačevo Assembly of Trumpet Players that negative impacts may result in bad experience of consumers about the destination and its image is highly important.

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