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Article

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Affirmation of Cultural Heritage Digital Promotion within Smart Destination Concept

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Abstract

The paper explores the perspectives of implementing digital, online promotion within the concept of smart destination development, aiming for the competitiveness that innovative tools and systems enable. Built heritage in developed tourism destinations presents an attractive resource, and its presentation through digital technology impacts culture's perception. With the development of new technologies and the adoption new digital and tourism trends, e-tourism cultural heritage promotion represents a significant challenge for destinations. Research design includes the identification of cultural heritage in tourism destinations followed by the longitudinal study, the research of progress in technology implementation, and an analysis of key tools for digital promotion. Several aspects are explored: online promotion, digitalization of heritage, and WiFi coverage for social networks' real-time streaming. Qualitative and quantitative methods aim to contribute new knowledge about the important use of online digital tools. The paper points to how the advantages and potentials of developing a smart culture in a destination, recognised as a strategic policy of development, are implemented in the digital marketing of heritage sites.

Keywords: Heritage buildings; Technologies; Online promotion; Smart destination

JEL classification: I25, O3, Z32

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Introduction

Tourism attractions are the main natural and anthropogenic resource basis, representing tourism development's key factor. However, as society and tourism are developing in times of fast experiential transience, where searching for new experiences is of the utmost importance, an accelerated trend is evident in the digital affirmation of the promotion of tourism attractions. This is developed in the domain and context of smart destinations, where culture, sustainability, accessibility, and technologies synergically blend. In the paper, using the comparative longitudinal study of the evaluation of digital promotion of selected attractions of the Town of Poreč in 2018, 2020, and 2022, the implementation is analysed of modern tourism trends, which include technology, heritage evaluation, and sustainable development. Based on the obtained data, the paper considers shifts and possibilities of even better tourism evaluation of the entire destination using e-marketing. Accordingly, five cultural tourism attractions have been selected, which represent the research subject. From the above stated arises the aim of the paper, which is to, using comparison, determine the advantages and disadvantages of digital promotion of the selected tourism attractions in the example of the Town of Poreč, as well as to see whether trends are followed and whether there are any improvements during the three biennial periods, i.e., the observed six-year period.

It is expected that, throughout the first and the second two-year periods, cultural attractions will be better promoted and that there will be fewer deficiencies in the promotion. This will also help identify the problem area that affects tourism destination stakeholders, from the local government and tourist board to small, medium, and large-scale entrepreneurship, organised catering offers, destination attractions, and other stakeholders. The questions are articulated as follows:

- Q1 "Does the development of digital promotion of tourism attractions follow the development of technology, promotional tools, and possibilities?"
- Q2 "How big are the real positions of affirmation of "smart" promotion of destination tourism attractions?"

The qualitative and quantitative methodology used in this research includes the study of professional and scientific literature, Internet website searches, and comparing the obtained data with statistical processing.

Tourism attractions and impact on smart destination development

The perception is very extended of tourism attractions as predominantly visual sensations which evoke powerful emotions in visitors. However, in the complex consideration of tourism attractions as a magnet that sets into motion the flywheel of the whole tourism system, i.e., as a "valorised resource which attracts visitors" and which primarily conditions the tourism development in a destination, among others, the following should also be assessed:

- real tourism attractions which should be placed in the market by a marketing procedure
- potential tourism attractions which should, first of all, be developed to suit tourism purposes, made accessible to tourists
- tourism attractions that tourists visit
- tourism attractions in which tourists engage themselves
- tourist attractions that tourists visit or are engaged in due to their leisurely self-indulgence.

Numerous authors deal with this topic. Čavlek et al. (2011) stress that tourism resources are any good, any mean, and any opportunity which can be used for tourism improvement, but which must contain a high degree of attractiveness, while Vuković and Čavlek (2001) discuss that resources attractive properties should constitute the basis of the tourism offer of a country.

A very simple definition arises from the stated task: "Tourism attractions, potential and real, are valorised tourism resources which can attract or are already attracting tourists to visit the tourism destination they are staying in." Their evaluation enters the domain of cultural tourism and affirms specific interest, complementary to accommodation forms of tourism which mainly dominate in summer resorts. Kušen (2002) differentiates anthropogenic attractions which are developed from the basic cultural resources:

- Cultural and historical heritage (cultural monuments, archaeological sites, urban protected areas, old towns, castles, and churches)
- Cultural and religious buildings (museums, theatres, pilgrimage centers)
- Events (festivals and theatre plays)
- Work-life balance culture (gastronomy, local population's lifestyle, ethnicity, folklore, tradition, and handicraft).

The diversification of tourism attractions by Goeldner and Ritchie (2009), who classify attractions into these main categories: cultural, natural, event, and recreational and entertainment attractions, is highlighted as the second key diversification. Consideration of tourist motivation within the context of attractions points to the fact that primary attractions are those which motivate tourists for visits and experiencing these attractions and the destination (Kušen, 2002) and, at the same time, shape the image of the whole destination. People who travel long distances will decide to make that journey only if the tourist attraction is something extraordinary or of great value that cannot be found everywhere (Vrtiprah, 2006).

Accessibility to tourist attractions is crucial for a positive marketing effect, where marked physical and public access is considered, as well as information points with printed information materials, required equipment and digital equipment, and the communicativeness of the attraction. Physical accessibility is realised using transport, while public accessibility represents connection via public roads and ways, private roads with a regulated legal service for tourists, or time-limited accessibility. On public surfaces and roads, attractions are marked by so-called "brown signposting," according to international standards, and pedestrian and similar roads have special signposts. The use of tourism attraction is conducted primarily through sightseeing with the aim of education or pleasure and through recreation and healing. Looking from the financial aspect, access to a tourism attraction can be free of charge or with a charge for an entrance ticket, made at the information points, facilities where required information can be found, sanitary points, interpretation boards, souvenir shops, printed brochures, flyers and multimedia materials, virtual animations and technological innovations (Floričić et al., 2019).

Depending on the tourism attraction, the attraction can be fitted with specific equipment (Kušen, 2002), including ambient light, sound, tactile elements, and other sensory experiences (Floričić, 2016).

This is why stakeholders, the local government, DMO organizations, and other stakeholders should objectively consider the attraction base of the destination, classify and evidence it in the map of tourism attractions, evaluate the potential of synergic action, and develop the strategies of marketing placement and promotion in the tourism market. Tourist boards, whose role in the tourism system is primarily promotional, informative, and educational, have that key role. Križman Pavlović

(2008) emphasised the importance of cooperation between destination stakeholders and the formation of coordinated strategic marketing in the placement of tourism products (Križman et al., 2008).

Looking from a wider perspective, the promotion goals are the provision of information, convincing and reminding and, in the context of tourism, these goals refer to the bearers of the tourism offer and their stimulation for selling the products and services in the tourism market (Senečić et al., 1997). The goals of the promotion in tourism are often stated as the AIDA model and relate to the drawing of attention (*attract*), creation of interest (*interest*), activating of desire (*desire*), and encouraging action (*action*) (Jakovljević, 2011).

The experience economy, as an experience melting pot, assumes a dominant position in the creation of demand and offers stakeholders should increase the value for consumers and create unforgettable experiences through the 4E elements: entertaining, educational, escapist, and aesthetic, form special services and programs by the implementation of co-creation, stress Pine and Gilmore (2011). Furthermore, numerous authors deal with the topic of special experience in tourism. Williams (2006), Loureiro (2014), and Kim et al. (2012) explore experience economy, presenting it as a recognition factor in the achievement of competitiveness in tourism (Kunst, 2008), Jurin (2016).

Smart technologies and tourism attractions

As a result of the accelerated development of technologies, in the past several decades' changes have penetrated all the business and communication spheres in tourism (Atembe, 2016, Smart tourism, 2020). They are reflected in digital transformation, mobile appliances, applications, and social networks. Opportunities are also opening for innovations in the tourism business, ensuring possibilities of adaptation for specific market requirements (UNWTO, 2020). For example, QR codes are used in promotion, scanning of which facilitates the opening of websites or interactive content with specific information about attractions, events, or other useful pieces of advice. The importance of virtual technologies is stressed, AR-augmented reality. VR technologies, where Google Glass is highlighted as a hands-free appliance similar to glasses which can be connected to the Internet and thus connect with other appliances, which is voice-activated and, among other functions, can send messages, take photographs, and make recordings. Others have found a useful way of use during certain promotional processes (Google, 2020). Technologies open numerous possibilities, not only because of the efficiency of specific simplified methods of use and finding of information but also due to the originality. In other words, novelty is presented to visitors, stimulating their interest and attractiveness for certain products and services, especially if they are introduced before competitors (Boes et al., 2015). An increased number of applications facilitate, improve or, in some other way, affect the visits to smart destinations (European Union, 2020). Spain has thus initiated "Interactive national parks of Spain", an application that enables access to information about national parks (history, flora, fauna, other curiosities), but also 2D and 3D models which show virtual scenes in high resolution, recorded by drones (The Smart City Journal, n.d.). Furthermore, the attractiveness of cultural routes is encompassed by virtual walks and attractions, conceived as virtual museums (PGZ County, 2021).

An example is AR technology in museums, which enables visitors to be informed in an interactive way (Ding, 2017). So, nowadays, many museums offer virtual exhibitions on their official websites. Theatre plays, concerts, and festivals also took place online, as well as virtual tours of certain sites and many other adaptations to

different situations in which restrictions and measures are imposed, limiting visits and physical contact due to the pandemic conditions. Robots were soon brought into use, as well as digital assistants and self-service kiosks, which, although extremely useful, cannot replace interpersonal communication with guests who wish to have it.

The concept of smart tourism is frequently misunderstood and linked expressly to technology, and all the aspects of such action are not considered. This is why it is necessary to provide a better definition of the smart concept and the greater involvement of government institutions in creating and implementing smart tourism projects. (Gretzel, et al., 2015). This primarily refers to cultural affirmation, sustainable development, inclusion, and physical accessibility.

Methodology

The Town of Poreč was selected for cultural heritage digital promotion research within the concept of a smart destination. An attractive geographical position of the Town of Poreč in the most touristy region in Croatia – Istria, which realised 32.9% of the total number of overnights and 28.7% of the total number of arrivals in the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2022) in 2021, as well as constant investment in tourism development, are predictors of numerous awards and acknowledgments, which were presented to the Town as one of the champions of Croatian tourism for many years. Apart from being considered one of the largest tourism “giants” in Croatia, the Town of Poreč is the only one in Istria whose tourist attraction is included on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Due to the considerable tourist traffic and protected UNESCO cultural heritage, the Town of Poreč was selected as a research site.

Poreč, one of the most visited tourist destinations in the Republic of Croatia, realised a total of 2,609,444 overnights and 430,615 arrivals in 2021, taking into consideration the post covid recovery period, while before the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, 3,485,232 overnights and 589,120 arrivals were realised (Istria County Tourist Board, 2022). According to the data for 2021, the accommodation structure in the area of the Town of Poreč Tourist Board shows that hotels dominate with 5,794 accommodation units (and 13,283 beds), followed by household facilities with 4,127 accommodation units (and 12,621 beds). Campsites follow with (1,235 accommodation units and 3,705 beds) and non-commercial accommodation (2,919 accommodation units and 12,740 beds). It is due to the quoted numbers that, today, the Town of Poreč is considered one of the strongest tourism centers in Croatia and, for fifty years, it has been called the metropolis of Croatian tourism.

One of the motives for tourist arrivals in Poreč is its rich cultural and historical heritage. Poreč is a town of mosaics, protected by its patron saint St. Mauro, a town whose historical center, as a living monument of culture, was being built for over 2,000 years, among which the most important landmark is the Euphrasian Basilica which, since 1997, has been included on the UNESCO world heritage list.

The criteria for the selection of cultural heritage are directed towards the availability of cultural heritage digital promotion, given that as many as 55,5% of respondents use the Internet as the main source of information about the destination (Tomas, 2019), the scope of material and non-material cultural heritage, as well as the cultural attraction specificities.

From the above stated, five tourist attractions were selected in the Town of Poreč, according to different criteria: the Euphrasian Basilica was selected as the only attraction in the County of Istria which, since 1997, has been included in the UNESCO

World Cultural Heritage List. Giostra and the Poreč Heritage Museum were selected as attractions which the Master plan of Tourism Development of the County of Istria 2015-2025 (Horwath, 2014) identified as events (the first one), i.e., included it as the most important monument heritage of the cluster of Poreč (the second). The Istrian Parliament is historically important and an insufficiently valorised attraction, as is the Zuccato Palace.

UNWTO supports sustainability and innovations for tourism to recover as soon as possible in the post-Covid period, thus providing guidelines for destination development (UNWTO, 2021). Websites are of the utmost importance for promoting tourism products, attraction, and retention of visitors.

For the research of digital promotion of the listed Poreč attractions, the Internet websites of the attractions themselves were chosen, i.e., attraction management websites and the County of Istria Tourist Board websites, as sites of the initial interaction between tourists and tourism attractions, which contain conjoined information about the tourist offer which also include information about cultural attractions.

Considering that it is important to create Internet websites that contain or express their purpose, history, products, and vision and which, at first sight, are attractive and sufficiently interesting the encouragement of repeated visits (Kotler et al., 2014), e-marketing tools were selected for evaluation of digital promotion of Poreč cultural attractions, taking into account the design elements of an efficient Internet website, according to Kotler (2014) – context, content, community, customisation, communication, connection, and commerce. According to the coverage of all the stated elements, the following e-marketing tools were selected: foreign languages, reviews/grades, photo gallery, virtual walk, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Newsletter, online booking, and an email contact form.

Data analysis includes the descriptive and comparative longitudinal statistical analysis of the three observed years, which implies the development of the smart tourism destination and its online promotion through differentiated e-marketing tools. The desktop research was conducted in March 2018, 2020, and 2022, and the results represent a platform for new knowledge and provide answers to research questions.

Results

Further to this, the digital promotions data evaluation is presented from the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board, selected tourism attractions from the years 2018, 2020, and 2022, and are longitudinally evaluated. Parallely, the data on digital promotion from the official Internet website of the selected tourism attraction is also evaluated for the same years. The evaluation elements are divided into ten e-marketing tool categories: foreign languages, reviews/grades, photo gallery, virtual walk, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Newsletter, online booking, and an email contact form.

The existence of a specific element is numerically coded with one and non-existence with 0. Letters and numbers showing changes related to the previous years are marked in red.

From Table 1, it is evident that the tourism attraction of the Poreč Heritage Museum has not been evaluated, i.e., on the County of Istria Tourist Board Internet website, information is not available about the said attraction because the facility is closed due to the restoration of the Sinčić Palace where the Museum is housed. The design of a new collection and exhibitions and social events occur only periodically.

In this case, it will be exempt from further data analysis. Also, the information on the tourism attraction Giostra 2018 was unavailable on the stated Internet website.

Table 1.

Evaluation of digital promotion of the Town of Poreč tourism attractions from the Internet website of the Istria Tourist Board in 2018, 2020 and 2022

E-marketing tools	Year	The Euphrasian Basilica	The Poreč Heritage Museum	The Zuccato Palace	Giostra	The Istrian Parliament
Foreign languages	2018	IT, DE, ENG, FR, RUS, NL	0	IT, DE, ENG, FR, RUS, NL	0	IT, DE, ENG, FR, RUS, NL
	2020	IT, ENG, DE	0	IT, ENG, DE	IT, ENG, DE	IT, ENG, DE
	2022	IT, ENG, DE	0	IT, ENG, DE	IT, ENG, DE	IT, ENG, DE
Reviews/ grades	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Photo gallery	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Virtual walk	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Facebook	2018	1	0	1	0	1
	2020	1	0	1	1	1
	2022	1	0	1	1	1
Instagram	2018	1	0	1	0	1
	2020	1	0	1	1	1
	2022	1	0	1	1	1
Twitter	2018	1	0	1	0	1
	2020	1	0	1	1	1
	2022	1	0	1	1	1
Pinterest	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Newsletter	2018	1	0	1	0	1
	2020	1	0	1	1	1
	2022	1	0	1	1	1
Online booking	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Email contact form	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Authors

Considering the availability of information on selected cultural attractions in foreign languages, it can be perceived from Table 1. On the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board, the number of foreign languages has been reduced in the last four years. In 2018, information on selected cultural attractions was available in six foreign languages. In 2020 and 2022, three foreign languages were eliminated

(French, Russian and Dutch), and only three languages (Italian, English, and German) remained. The reason for this is a decrease in costs due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, and the criteria for selection of available foreign languages in 2020 and 2022 were partly directed towards the largest number of arrivals and overnights according to the countries of origin (the choice of the German language). The choice of the Italian language was determined in line with the bilingualism of the Town of Poreč area. In contrast, the choice of the English language is essential, as it is a world language that dominates all forms of communication.

Certain e-marketing tools – reviews, photo galleries, virtual walks, Pinterest, and online bookings for the mentioned tourism attractions are not available on the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board, which anyhow provides the additional possibility to consider the implementation of the said tools to increase the interest of a larger number of visitors to the tourism destination in the stated attractions.

On the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board, a possibility is available for sharing information on social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, for all the listed attractions (except for the Poreč Heritage Museum, for the above-cited reason and Giostra, which was listed as a tourism attraction on the stated Internet website after the year 2018). Also, the possibility of a newsletter is available for the listed attractions as a tool for providing information and direct communication with potential visitors.

To attract as many visitors as possible and further informing of potential visitors, each tourism attraction should have its website. An analysis of the digital promotion of the selected tourism attractions on the official Internet website of attractions is therefore provided, shown in Table 2.

When analysing the availability of foreign languages on the Internet websites of tourism attractions, it is evident that, throughout all of the observed years, the attraction Euphrasian Basilica has the highest number of foreign languages, which justifies the fact that it is one of the most beautiful, preserved monuments of the Early Byzantine art in the Mediterranean, included on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List. Other tourist attractions have two to three available foreign languages, apart from the attraction Zuccato Palas, which has no available foreign languages.

E-market tools – reviews, Twitter, Pinterest, as well as online booking are not represented as possibilities on the Internet websites of the selected tourism attractions.

A photo gallery is available on the Internet website of the listed attractions, apart from the Poreč Heritage Museum. In contrast, virtual walking, as a modern marketing tool that enables a realistic experience of the space, regardless of the space and time, is not available for any tourism attraction.

While the social network Facebook has been available on the Internet websites of all stated attractions in the last four years, the social network Instagram is available on the websites of two attractions – Poreč Heritage Museum and Zuccato Palace. The only tourist attraction in 2022 which has the possibility of a newsletter on the Internet websites is the tourism attraction Zuccato Palace. It is commendable that all Internet websites of the listed tourism attractions have email contact forms.

Comparing the digital promotion of selected tourist attractions - the website of the Istria Tourist Board and the official website of tourist attractions, it is evident that the Internet website of the tourism attraction Euphrasian Basilica contains three foreign languages (Russian, French and Spanish) more than the County of Istria Tourist Board Internet website in the years 2020 and 2022. On its Internet website, the Zuccato

Palace has no availability of foreign languages, and the Istrian Parliament has one foreign language on the County of Istria Tourist Board Internet website.

The advantage of the tourism attractions' Internet websites over the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board Internet website is evident in the tool photo gallery, as all the selected tourism attractions (apart from the Poreč Heritage Museum) have a photo gallery on their Internet websites as an essential element of drawing the attention and awakening interest in a potential visitor.

Table 2.

Evaluation of digital promotion of the Town of Poreč tourism attractions from the official Internet website of tourism attractions in 2018, 2020 and 2022

E-marketing tools	Year	The Euphrasian Basilica	The Poreč Heritage Museum	The Zuccato Palace	Giostra	The Istrian Parliament
Foreign languages	2018	ENG, IT, DE, RUS, FR, ESP	ENG, IT	0	ENG, IT, DE	ENG, IT
	2020	ENG, IT, DE, RUS, FR, ESP	ENG, IT	0	ENG, IT, DE	ENG, IT
	2022	ENG, IT, DE, RUS, FR, ESP	ENG, IT	0	ENG, IT, DE	ENG, IT
Reviews / grades	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Photo gallery	2018	1	0	1	1	1
	2020	1	0	1	1	1
	2022	1	0	1	1	1
Virtual walk	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Facebook	2018	0	1	1	1	1
	2020	1	1	1	1	1
	2022	1	1	1	1	1
Instagram	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	1	1	0	0
	2022	0	1	1	0	0
Twitter	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Pinterest	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Newsletter	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	1	0	0
Online booking	2018	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	0	0	0	0	0
	2022	0	0	0	0	0
Email contact form	2018	1	1	1	1	1
	2020	1	1	1	1	1
	2022	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Author's work

Apart from the stated advantages of the tourism attractions' Internet websites, an advantage can also be perceived in the email contact form tool, which facilitates direct contact and two-way communication with potential visitors for all the listed attractions concerning the Internet website of the County of Istria Tourist Board.

The deficiencies of the Internet websites of the listed attractions about the Internet websites of the official tourism portal of the County are evident from the availability of the social networks (especially Instagram and Twitter), as well as the newsletter, which is present only on the Internet websites of the attraction Zuccato Palace in 2022. With the development of new technological trends and accelerated expansion of mass use of applications, changes occur in consumers' behaviour and the use of, more recently, social networks. It is, therefore, necessary to follow the world's technology and tourism trends and adapt one's own offer to the tourists' requirements to achieve a more efficient promotion and attract a larger number of tourists.

Reviews, virtual walks, Pinterest, and online booking represent e-marketing tools that are not present on either of the two observed Internet websites and represent a potential for further development and improvement.

Discussion

In consideration of positive shifts in the period from 2018 to 2022, a discussion is developed about the dynamics of the implementation of technological tools. The longitudinal research points to digital promotion with a special reference to the COVID pandemic period, where the destination stakeholders and attraction managers had the time for consideration and a reset. Namely, due to a lull in tourist traffic, the attraction management recognised the advantages of digitalisation, that is, the necessary need for communication with potential visitors, which remains present in the minds of consumers through social networks and affirms competitiveness for the post-pandemic period.

Given the importance of continuous communication with potential visitors, Internet websites must serve as a tool for promoting tourism attractions and as the main information and communication channel. It is the same pandemic period that served to reflect on improving them, and, in recent years, certain e-marketing tools were included on the stated Internet websites, such as social networks and newsletters, which enable interactive communication with potential visitors.

It is presumed that, in the choice of tourism destination and tourist attractions, visitors primarily inform themselves on the main tourism website, by which they expect to receive useful information. Therefore, it is very important that the Internet website is simple and well-structured and contains multimedia content, i.e., that it encompasses e-marketing tools that will intrigue potential visitors and encourage them to move into action. By analysing the selected Internet websites, it is evident that they are improved concerning the pre-pandemic period; however, there is still substantial potential for the development of certain e-marketing tools, such as virtual walks, reviews, and online booking, which, by being implemented, would contribute to the quality of the website itself. Further to this, considering the year 2022, a tendency is recognised towards the realization of new competitiveness through the monitoring of modern trends, the realization of tourist visits, and comprehensive excellence, which is aimed at an increase in the integrated quality of the destinations as SMART destinations of the future.

Although shifts are visible in the digital promotion of tourism attractions during and following the pandemic period, there certainly is considerable potential for further

development and introduction of new e-marketing tools to increase interest in potential visitors by following new trends of the development of technology and promotional possibilities. For example, the potential for the development is certainly evident in the introduction of virtual walks, which today represents an essential e-marketing tool that enables the virtual perception of the tourist attraction to potential visitors, i.e., a view from another perspective. According to the aforementioned, the answer to the research question Q1 would read that digital promotion of tourist attractions does not fully follow the development of technology, promotional tools, and possibilities. Namely, in today's dynamic world, the development of technology, promotional tools, and other digital possibilities occurs very fast. Thus the lagging behind in the digital promotion of tourist attractions is not surprising.

It arises from the research that the reaction to the challenges in developing the digital promotion of tourism attractions should be more energetic, as it does not keep pace with the promotional tools and the possibilities of technological benefits. Technology development and promotional tools provide tourist attractions with newer, simpler, and more efficient possibilities for reaching the target groups concerning previous promotion types. Therefore, tourist attraction management needs to constantly follow the trends of technology development, i.e., promotional tools, to get to know the ways of its promotion in a newer, technologically advanced manner and, in this way, assume the leading role in the competitive market.

It can be concluded from this research that the destination tourist attractions cannot be affirmed through "smart" promotion, which the answer is given to the research question Q2. For the affirmation and promotion of the "smart" concept, a synergic activity of relevant stakeholders is required. By a synergic approach, supported by continuous monitoring of the development of technological trends and their implementation in the promotion of the destination tourist attractions, the development of a "smart" destination certainly can be achieved through the interest and attraction of a larger number of visitors.

Conclusion

A powerful development of technological achievements, especially in the pandemic period, has created new possibilities for promoting heritage tourism, enabling future "buyers" to view it from another perspective.

The progress of technology and new possibilities of presentation and virtual reality have brought new, revolutionary, and interactive presentation methods. Modern society is defined by information technologies used daily by modern tourists. Mobile technologies, applications, social networks, and different Internet platforms facilitate interactivity, continuity, fast information transfer, information dissemination, trading, and flexibility in tourism. For adaptation to modern tourists who have, influenced by the development of new technologies, adopted new ways of thinking and perceptions of tourism and culture, e-marketing tools, as possibilities for digital promotion of tourism attractions, have been evaluated in the paper.

The study results generate practical and academic implications in the smart destination context. The practical contribution is reflected in the recommendations to the destination stakeholders who manage tourist attractions, the most important being:

- Investing efforts and adjusting trends and dynamics of promotion of tourism attractions
- Education in the domain of e-marketing to improve customer experience

- Benchmarking for implementation of good practices

In periods of extraordinary situations, in particular, in which human factors cannot affect or may affect in a small measure, the importance of unhindered interactive communication with virtual "buyers" is evident, which, with the development of digital promotion, can help the destination in individual approach and satisfaction of potential visitors. The recommendation for the improvement of digital promotion of tourism attractions and cultural heritage are directed towards the decision makers, managers of tourism attractions and cultural heritage, DMOs, and all destination stakeholders to, with a joint approach, consider the possibility of implementation of digital e-tools to present their offer "to the world" in a modern, digital manner while making sure that the presented content is interesting and simple, as well as that it creates a possible "real" perception of the tourism and cultural heritage. By consideration of potential e-marketing tools, they will be acquainted with modern models of digital promotion possibilities of their implementation and thus access a larger number of potential visitors.

This paper's research results represent a scientific contribution to the social sciences, marketing, and tourism branch, manifested in the interactive approach of smart technologies and tourist attractions as a potential for developing "smart" destinations. In the perspective of consideration of the topics which will contribute to new knowledge, the need is presented to research promotion on social networks, given that an evident shift is stressed in the affirmation of that online promotion tool. Future research should also include tourists as stakeholders of the tourist demand. The research limitations are reflected in the sample choice and its specific features as one of the most visited destinations in Croatia. Future recommendations are directed toward the selection of other destinations which can evaluate continental tourist attractions. These limitations also refer to the choice of tourist web portals.

The topics challenging the factors of influence on visits, perception of attractiveness, and implementation of innovations where they, by themselves, carry certain levels of attractiveness, represent a platform for the development of smart destinations which, besides technology and social and cultural sustainability, also affirm inclusion and accessibility for sensitive groups.

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