

TOURIST PERCEPTIONS OF „GREEN BEACH“ IN ISTRIA (CROATIA)

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Abstract

Preservation of natural and cultural heritage is one of the main goals in sustainable tourism development. Due to the increasing number of trips and tourist arrivals in destinations and therefore the increasing number of beach users in the coastal destinations, in order to preserve the natural and cultural heritage, it is important to manage the beaches in a sustainable and responsible way. Since most of the tourist arrivals in Croatia are on the coast the favourite activity of tourists is swimming / bathing (TOMAS, 2017). Managing the beach in sustainable way is a good policy for the future. It is well-known that further development of tourism depends on the resources the region has. For achieving sustainable tourism development the negative impacts of tourism must be limited as much as possible (Vehbi, 2012). In this process, besides of participation of all stakeholders (local communities, government and tourists) it is important to educate tourists/visitors about the importance of preserving natural resources in order to reduce and minimize the negative impacts of tourism and become responsible (Ng S.I. et al., 2017). Consumers perceive the concept of responsible tourism in different ways which are mostly not stable but rather fluid and variable (Caruana R. et al., 2014). The aim of the presented research was to determine tourists perceptions about “Green beach“ and its sustainability and would they likely choose this kind of beach instead the usual one. For the research purpose a survey was created for the beach users in three destinations of Istria County: City of Poreč, City of Novigrad and City of Labin (Rabac area). The surveys were offered in the Croatian, English, German, Italian, Russian, Slovenian and Croatian languages. In total, from July until September, 1621 questionnaires were collected. The research was conducted within the project MITOMED+ and the results can be helpful for planning and creating strategies and innovating solutions for sustainable beach management in destinations/regions. The main goal is to avoid the negative impacts on biodiversity and to improve the quality of tourists and locals experience on the beaches.

Key words: sustainable tourism, tourists' perceptions, „Green beach“ model, Istria County; sustainability, beach, responsible tourism, coastal and maritime tourism

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