

Završni izvještaj naručitelju

Provedba Ugovora o pružanju usluga
u okviru projekta EXCOVER

Razdoblje do 6.3.2020.

Izvešće o provedbi projekta Excover za razdoblje od 24. prosinca 2019. do 6. ožujka 2020.

Ovo se izvješće izrađuje sukladno članku 5. Ugovora o pružanju usluga - projekt "EXCOVER koji se sufinancira iz programa INTERREG ITALIJA-HRVATSKA 2014.-2020., a koji je 29.11.2019.-e sklopljen između Javne ustanove Razvojna agencija Ličko-senjske županije – LIRA (u daljnjem tekstu: Naručitelj) i Logoteam d.o.o. (u daljnjem tekstu: Izvršitelj).

U proteklom razdoblju nije bilo smetnji u realizaciji Ugovora, te su predviđene aktivnosti u cijelosti izvršene, a što je razvidno iz detaljnijeg opisa aktivnosti u nastavku.

Obveze i aktivnosti izvršitelja

Sukladno Ugovoru Izvršitelj je imao preostale obveze:

3. organizirati i održati 2 (dva) seminara za lokalne dionike (radionice fokus grupe)
4. izraditi dokument Izvešće o SWOT analizi
5. izraditi dokument Izvešće o reputacijskoj analizi
6. provesti druge aktivnosti koje su navedene u Prilogu 3. - Projektni zadatak u sklopu Poziva na dostavu ponude u postupku jednostavne nabave usluge tehničke pomoći za realizaciju SWOT i reputacijske analize u okviru projekta EXCOVER (ID: 10047202), evidencijski broj: EV /05-2019 (KLASA: 441-01/19-01/04, URBROJ: 2125/66-02-19-06) od dana 30. listopada 2019. godine.

Opis izvršenih aktivnosti

Ad3) Organizirati i održati 2 (dva) seminara za lokalne dionike (radionice fokus grupe)

- Izvršitelj je za Naručitelja u proteklom periodu obavio slijedeće:
 - o Sudjelovao na sastanku u Bologni za pripremu seminara
 - o Odredio i educirao četvero djelatnika za provedbu seminara
 - o Sastavio u suradnji s Naručiteljem listu pozvanih za sudjelovanje na seminaru
 - o Telefonski nazivao i motivirao dionike za dolazak na seminare
 - o Održao seminare u Gospiću 19. i 20. veljače 2020.

- Ukupno je seminarima prisustvovalo 23 dionika
 - Izradio transkripte sa seminara i dostavio ih UNIZD
 - Uključio rezultate seminara u SWOT analizu
- Stupanj izvršenosti: 100% (od toga 100% u ovom razdoblju)

Ad4) Izraditi dokument Izvješće o SWOT analizi

- Izvršitelj je za Naručitelja u proteklom periodu obavio slijedeće:
 - U suradnji sa Annalisom Stanchini iz UNIBO, te prema dostavljenoj metodologiji izradio SWOT analizu temeljem izrađenih anketa i seminara
- Stupanj izvršenosti: 100% (od toga 100% u ovom razdoblju)

Ad5) izraditi dokument Izvješće o reputacijskoj analizi

- Izvršitelj je za Naručitelja u proteklom periodu obavio slijedeće:
 - U suradnji sa Annalisom Stanchini iz UNIBO, te prema dostavljenoj metodologiji izradio Reputacijsku analizu temeljem izrađenih anketa i seminara
 - Kao dodatak reputacijskoj analizi izradio i Google trends analizu.
- Stupanj izvršenosti: 100% (od toga 100% u ovom razdoblju)

Izvještaj sastavljen u Rijeci 23. prosinca 2019.

Sastavio: Dražen Žgaljić, direktor Logoteam d.o.o.

Potpis:


 **LOGOTEAM**
d.o.o.
RIJEKA, Ratka Petrovića 30



U privitku:

- Izvještaj sa fokus grupa
- Gospić SWOT analysis
- Ecover – Local reputations analysis - Gospić

SEMINARI IZGRADNJE KAPACITETA/FOKUS GRUPE - EXCOVER

Gospić, 19. i 20. veljače 2020. godine

1. POZIV ZA 19.VELJAČE 2020.

KLASA: 441-01/20-01/02
URBROJ: 2125/66-02-20-01
Gospić, 13.02.2020.

PREDMET: Poziv na seminar izgradnje kapaciteta - fokus grupa
- dostavlja se

Poštovani,

Javna ustanova Razvojna agencija Ličko-senjske županije - LIRA vodeći je partner na projektu EXCOVER, koji je financiran kroz INTERREG program prekogranične suradnje Italija - Hrvatska.

Svrha projekta je **identificirati inovativna rješenja za razvoj turizma malih gradova** s dragocjenim lokalnim vrijednostima koja imaju mali broj turističkih posjeta te doprinjeti boljoj teritorijalnoj i sezonskoj raspodjeli turističke posjete u Hrvatskoj i Italiji.


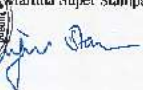
Tijekom prosinca 2019. godine na području Ličko-senjske županije je provedeno anketiranje lokalnog stanovništva i posjetitelja, a na temelju čega je izrađena SWOT analiza.

Idući korak je koncentriranje rezultata dobivenih na terenu kako bi se pokrenuo proces valorizacije turističkih potencijala pod vodstvom zajednice. Ovim putem Vas pozivamo da se pridružite Fokus grupi i seminaru o izgradnji kapaciteta za članike zajednice, koji će se održati u srijedu 19. veljače 2020. godine u Gospiću, Odjel za nastavničke studije u Gospiću, Ulica dr. Ante Starčevića 12 (predavaonica broj 2, 2.kat) s početkom u 10 sati.



Molimo da prijave za sudjelovanje (ime i prezime, kontakt i organizacija) pošaljete do utorka 18. veljače na mail: anita@subjekt.eu.

Sa štovanjem,

Ravnateljica
Mrtina Šuper Štampar

2. POZIV ZA 20.VELJAČE 2020.

KLASA: 441-01/20-01/02
URBROJ: 2125/66-02-20-02
Gospić, 13.02.2020.

PREDMET: Poziv na seminar izgradnje kapaciteta – fokus grupa
- dostavlja se

Poštovani,

Javna ustanova Razvojna agencija Ličko-senjske županije - LIRA vodeći je partner na projektu EXCOVER, koji je financiran kroz INTERREG program prekogranične suradnje Italija - Hrvatska.

Svrha projekta je **identificirati inovativna rješenja za razvoj turizma malih gradova** s dragocjenim lokalnim vrijednostima koja imaju mali broj turističkih posjeta te doprinijeti boljoj teritorijalnoj i sezonskoj raspodjeli turističke posjete u Hrvatskoj i Italiji.



Tijekom prosinca 2019. godine na području Ličko-senjske županije je provedeno anketiranje lokalnog stanovništva i posjetitelja, a na temelju čega je izrađena SWOT analiza.

Idući korak je komentiranje rezultata dobivenih na terenu kako bi se pokrenuo proces valorizacije turističkih potencijala pod vodstvom zajednice. Ovim putem Vas pozivamo da se pridružite Fokus grupi i seminaru o izgradnji kapaciteta za domaću zajednicu, koji će se održati u **četvrtak 20. veljače 2020. godine** u Gospiću, Odjel za nastavničke studije u Gospiću, Ulica dr. Ante Starčevića 12 (predavaonica broj 2, 2.kat) s početkom u 10 sati.

Molimo da prijave za sudjelovanje (ime i prezime, kontakt i organizacija) pošaljete do utorka 18. veljače na mail: anita@subjekt.eu.

Sa štuovanjem,

Ravnateljica
sc Martina Super Štanpar

3. AGENDA

SEMINAR IZGRADNJE KAPACITETA – FOKUS GRUPA

Gdje: Odjel za nastavničke studije u Gospiću, Ulica dr. Ante Starčevića 12 (predavaonica broj 2, 2.kat)

Kada: 19. i 20. veljače 2020. u 10 sati

Plan rada:

- 10.00** Registracija sudionika
- 10.10** O projektu EXCOVER
- 10.30** Predstavljanje rezultata anketiranja
- 10.45** Fokus grupa: SWOT
- 12.00** Pauza
- 12.20** Radionica: SWOT i novi turistički proizvod
- 13.20** Prezentiranje grupnog rada
- 14.00** Zaključci

4. KRATKI IZVJEŠTAJ

Tijekom 19. i 20. veljače 2020. godine u Gospiću su održani seminari izgradnje kapaciteta i fokus grupe u okviru projekta EXCOVER. Seminari izgradnje kapaciteta su trajali četiri sata i održani su u suradnji s vodećim parterom LIRA-om te Sveučilištem u Zadru, **Odjelom za nastavničke studije u Gospiću, koji je osigurao prostor i tehničku podršku. Prvog dana seminara sudionici su bile osobe s područja Grada Gospića, dok su tijekom drugog dana sudionici bili iz Gospića i drugih krajeva Ličko-senjske županije obuhvaćenih projektom EXCOVER.**

U uvodnom dijelu je predstavljen projekt EXCOVER te rezultati anketiranja lokalnog stanovništva za SWOT analizu. Nakon toga je održana fokus grupa, tijekom koje su sudionici izrazili svoje mišljenje o tvrdnjama iz SWOT analize. Sudionici su postojeće jakosti, slabosti, prilike i prijetnje mogli nadopuniti, izmijeniti ili argumentirano opovrgnuti, a u konačnici su rangirali tvrdnje s obzirom na važnost koju imaju za razvoj turizma u Lici. Mišljenje sudionika fokus grupa je u uvršteno u konačnu verziju SWOT analize, koja odražava mišljenja ispitanika tijekom anketiranja i sudionika fokus grupa.

Nakon SWOT analize, sudionici su u grupama radili na idejama za novi turistički proizvod. Bili su podijeljeni u tri grupe, s obzirom na teme kojima se inače bave: aktivni turizam u prirodi, kulturni turizam i gastro turizam. Tijekom grupnog rada, sudionici su primijenili spoznaje vezane uz SWOT analizu kako bi dali prijedloge kojima se može obogatiti postojeća turistička ponuda novim sadržajima.

5. POPIS SUDIONIKA

Datum: 19.2.2020.

Ime i prezime	Organizacija
1. Andrija Brkljačić	LIRA
2. Martina Šuper Štampar	LIRA
3. Karolina Prpić Bogojević	LIRA
4. Viktorija Rogić	Klaster Lika destination
5. Marijana Svetić	OPG
6. Goran Šarić	Iznajmljivač
7. Marija Maras	JU Park prirode Velebit
8. Anita Bušljeta Tonković	Institut Ivo Pilar
9. Deni Ivanov	Sveučilište u Zadru
10. Valerij Jurešić	Logoteam
11. Lorena Badanjak	Logoteam
12. Tea Gorup	Logoteam
13. Marino Perović	Sveučilište u Zadru
14. Lucijana Kosović	Iznajmljivač
15. Anita Ladišić	Logoteam

Datum: 20.2.2020.

Ime i prezime	Organizacija
1. Ljiljana Hrgota	Općina Plitvička jezera
2. Tea Vuković	Općina Plitvička jezera
3. Jelena Milković	JU PP Grabovača
4. Ana Miletić	Općina Lovinac/Lovinački turistički forum
5. Patricia Dujmović	Grad Otočac
6. Zdenka Kostelac	TZG Otočca
7. Sonja Leka	Udruga građana Tara/ Hotel Lyra
8. Andrija Brkljačić	LIRA
9. Martina Šuper Štampar	LIRA
10. Tomislav Čanić	HPS – Planinarsko društvo
11. Karolina Prpić Bogojević	LIRA
12. Tea Gorup	Logoteam
13. Lorena Badanjak	Logoteam
14. Valerij Jurešić	Logoteam
15. Anita Ladišić	Logoteam


6. POTPISNE LISTE



POTPISNA LISTA: FOKUS GRUPA/SEMINAR O IZGRADNJI KAPACITETA ZA DIONIKE ZAJEDNICE

Mjesto i datum: Gospić, 19.2.2020.

Potpisani sudionik, pristajem na korištenje i obradu osobnih podataka (ime, prezime, organizacija, e-mail) u svrhu primanja obavijesti i informacija o aktivnostima na projektu EXCOVER. Osobne podatke (ime, prezime, organizacija), fotografije i video zapise snimljene na događaju organizator će koristiti u svrhu pripreme izvješća o provedbi aktivnosti. Kao sudionik fokus grupe upoznat sam sa činjenicom da se na fokus grupi snima audio zapis, ali samo zbog izrade skupnog izvješća. Audio snimke neće biti proslijeđene trećoj strani i uništiti će se odmah po završetku projekta, odnosno najkasnije u roku od 90 dana od završetka projekta.

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3	KAROLINA PRPIC BOGOJEVIĆ	LIRA	karolina.prpic.bogojevic@lira-lira.hr	
4	Nikolija Rogić	KLABTER LIKA DESTINATION	lika.destination@znanost.hr	
5	Marijana Svetić	OPG	svetic117@gmail.com	
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8	ANITA BUŠIJEVA TONKOVIC	Institut Ivo Pilar	anita.busijeva@ipilar.hr	
9	DANI IVANOV	UMIZD	danivanov@umizd.hr	
10	Vasery Jarišić	LOGOTEAM / LIRA	vasery@logoteam.eu	


1



POTPISNA LISTA: FOKUS GRUPA/SEMINAR O IZGRADNJI KAPACITETA ZA DIONIKE ZAJEDNICE

Mjesto i datum: Gospić, 19.2.2020.

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Broj	Ime i prezime	Organizacija	E-mail	Potpis
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16				
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2

POTPISNA LISTA: FOKUS GRUPA/SEMINAR O IZGRADNJI KAPACITETA ZA DIONIKE ZAJEDNICE

Mjesto i datum: Gospić, 20.2.2020.

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Broj	Ime i prezime	Organizacija	E-mail	Potpis
1	KJILJANA HROŠTA	OPĆINA PLITVIČKA JEZERA	kylljana.hrosta@plitvicka-jezera.hr	[Signature]
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3	TELENA MILKOVIĆ	TO"PP GRADINA HČA"	info.gradinaca@pp.hr	[Signature]
4	ANA MIČEVIĆ	OPĆINA LOVINAR	ica.lovinar@pp.hr	[Signature]
5	PATRIJKA DUJMOVIĆ	GRAD OTČAC	patricia.dujmovic@otcac.hr	[Signature]
6	Zdenka Koskelec	TEG OTOČCA	info@teg-otocca.hr	[Signature]
7	SOLJA LELA	UDRUŽENJE GRAĐANA TARA	solja.lela@tara.hr	[Signature]
8	ANDRIJA VUKAČIĆ	LIRA	andrija.vukacic@lira.hr	[Signature]
9	MARTINA ŠUPER ŠTAVIČAR	LIRA	martina.super@lira.hr	[Signature]
10	TOMISLAV ČARLIĆ	H.P.S. - Hrvatska narodna demokracija	tomislav.cartic@hps.hr	[Signature]

1

POTPISNA LISTA: FOKUS GRUPA/SEMINAR O IZGRADNJI KAPACITETA ZA DIONIKE ZAJEDNICE

Mjesto i datum: Gospić, 20.2.2020.

Potpisani sudionik, pristajem na korištenje i obradu osobnih podataka (ime, prezime, organizacija, e-mail) u svrhu primanja obavijesti i informacija o aktivnostima na projektu EXCOVER. Osobne podatke (ime, prezime, organizacija), fotografije i video zapise snimljene na događaju organizator će koristiti u svrhu pripreme izvješća o provedbi aktivnosti. Kao sudionik fokus grupe upoznat sam sa činjenicom da se na fokus grupi snima audio zapis, ali samo zbog izrade skupnog izvješća. Audio snimke neće biti proslijeđene trećoj strani i uništiti će se odmah po završetku projekta, odnosno najkasnije u roku od 90 dana od završetka projekta.

Broj	Ime i prezime	Organizacija	E-mail	Potpis
11	KAROLINA BOPIC BOGOJEVIĆ	LIRA	karolina.bopic@lira.hr	[Signature]
12	TEA GORUP	LOGOTEAM / LIRA	tea@subject.eu	[Signature]
13	LORENA BABANJAK	LOGOTEAM / LIRA	lorena@subject.eu	[Signature]
14	MARCO JUREŠIĆ	LOGOTEAM / LIRA	marco@subject.eu	[Signature]
15	ANITA LADIŠIĆ	LOGOTEAM / LIRA	anita@subject.eu	[Signature]
16				
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7. PRILOZI

Fotografije prvog dana – 19.2.2020.



Fotografije drugog dana – 20.2.2020.



EXCOVER – LOCAL SWOT REPORT

GOSPIĆ

REPORT MADE BY LOGOTEAM D.O.O., RIJEKA

OUTLINE

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1. RESIDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE

Gospić joined the EXCOVER Project aiming at improving its residents' life and economic conditions, while preserving the local cultural identity and environmental resources, through the development of sustainable tourism. To reach this goal, the participation of the local community in the tourism development planning and implementation phases is fundamental, in fact, it is one of the main characteristics of tourism development processes to be sustainable. Thus, before going into the residents survey-based SWOT Analysis, the main topic of this report, the willingness to participate in the local tourism development of the interviewees is investigated by means of a participation index, developed to meet the informative needs of EXCOVER.

The residents' participation index is built with information of a different kind, both direct (retrieved from the answers to specific questions) and indirect (making use of response rates), collected during the SWOT survey. The index is a weighted average of 5 components:

- "1_COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION": the evaluation of the extent to which the respondent's local community is willing to participate in the local tourist development (directly asked in the questionnaire and measured with the reported level of agreement, in the range [1, 7]);
- "2_MAIL LEFT": the actual willingness to be more involved and active in the tourism development planning (estimated indirectly with the rate of respondents who left their personal e-mail address to be contacted in the near future to provide further information about their town);
- "3_PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE": the self-reported willingness of the respondent to make use of sharing economy platforms to share something of his own with visitors (directly asked in the questionnaire).
- "4_WELCOMING COMMUNITY": the assessment of the extent to which tourists and people with different cultures are welcomed by the respondent's local community (directly asked in the questionnaire and measured with the reported level of agreement, in the range [1, 7]);
- "5_RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT": the manifested intention to participate in the local tourism development by providing information (indirectly retrieved from the average response rate to the SWOT open-ended questions, that require a considerable involvement and effort, compared to closed-ended ones);

As the first 2 components of the index are expressed on a scale ranging between 1 and 7 (while the other components are rates), they are normalized by dividing the average level of agreement by the maximum value possible (that is 7), to facilitate comparisons. The 5 components are weighted based on their relative importance in the context of EXCOVER, especially in view of the forthcoming activities of the next working packages:

- weight of 1_COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION = 0.4
- weight of 2_MAIL LEFT = 0.2
- weight of 3_PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE= 0.2
- weight of 4_WELCOMING COMMUNITY= 0.1
- weight of 5_RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT = 0.1

By construction, the minimum value of the participation index is 0, the maximum is 1.

1.1 ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPATION INDEX

In Gospić, the participation index and its 5 components, described above, take the following values:

The component that takes the highest value of 0.92 is RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, as shown in Figure 1. RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT refers to the manifested intention of the respondents to participate in the local tourism development by providing information. This shows that the residents are willing to get engaged in tourism development in their area and it is extremely important for the continuation of the EXCOVER project as it shows their proactive and enthusiastic attitude.

This is followed by the components PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE with a rate of 0.81 and WELCOMING COMMUNITY with a rate of 0.8.

The component PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE confirms the positive attitude of residents towards sharing goods and services. Although at first, the residents were not that familiar with different sharing economy platforms, once they got an idea what sharing economy meant, they showed a very high level of willingness to make use of it and share something of their own with the visitors. Therefore, this component can be related to RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, as one of the ways how the respondents can be engaged in the local tourism development is through sharing economy.

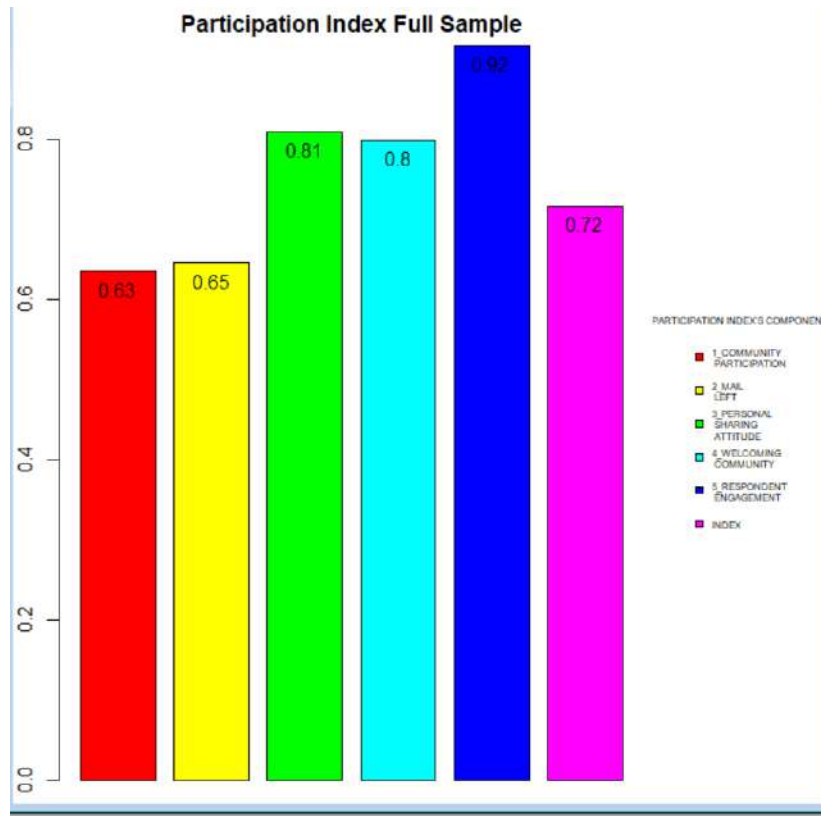
WELCOMING COMMUNITY refers to the extent to which tourists and people with different cultures are welcomed by the respondent's local community. The combination of all three elements – RESPONDENT ENGAGEMENT, PERSONAL SHARING ATTITUDE and WELCOMING COMMUNITY is of utmost importance for tourism development, especially tourism development related to sharing economy. Furthermore, it is more likely for tourists to perceive a destination in a positive way if they meet hospitable and engaged residents who are willing to share time, knowledge and other resources with them. These are all highly valuable elements for creating a positive destination image and residents who are open and positive

towards tourists will most probably have a positive impact on the overall satisfaction of tourists with the destination they are visiting.

The component “MAIL LEFT”, namely the actual willingness to be more involved and active in the tourism development planning, is another positive component, with a rate of 0.65. It shows that most of the respondents were open and willing to be further involved in the EXCOVER project. By showing interest for the project and willingness to be available for further communication, the prosecution of the EXCOVER project, namely citizens’ involvement in WP4 and WP5 stands a good chance, if one is to judge it according to the above-mentioned findings.

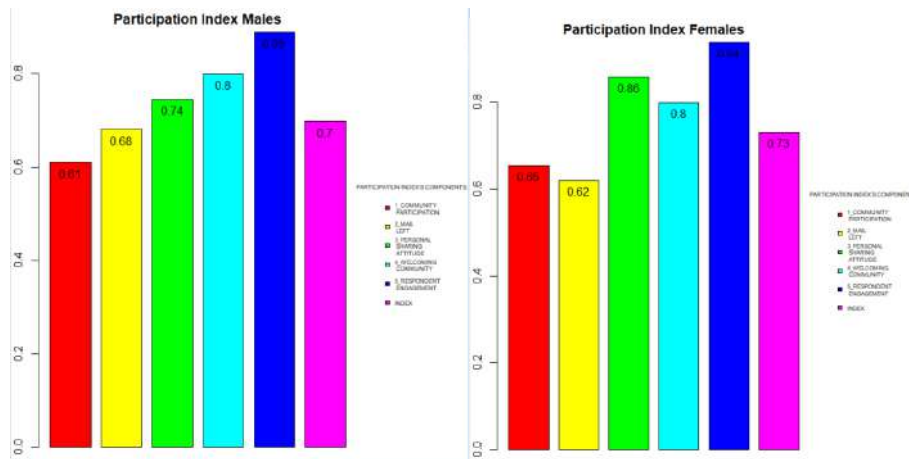
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION index refers to the extent to which the respondent’s local community is willing to participate in the local tourist development. With a rate of 0.63, this component takes the lowest value, which might indicate certain alarms, although the rate itself is still positive. While it can be concluded that the respondents are willing to share something of their own with the tourists and get engaged in the local tourism development, when it comes to uniting them as a community towards reaching a common goal, there might be some obstacles. Why the respondents themselves are willing to get engaged while they are more sceptical about the engagement of their community as a whole, should be further investigated. However, it might indicate that there is a certain doubt when it comes to collaboration among different members of the community and stronger bonds and trust in community should be established to increase this index.

Figure 1 - Participation Index for Gospić



Although there aren't significant differences in the respondents' availability to participate between males and females, from the graphs reported in Figure 2 it can be concluded that women are more willing to get engaged and participate in the development of local tourism. This is especially visible when it comes to sharing economy, which is usually recognized as an opportunity to earn an extra income. Since the idea of tourism-related sharing economy often involves sharing their own skills and knowledge, the results show that women are more open and willing to this than male respondents. Whether this is related to traditional roles in which women are usually those who take care of their households and families and attend the guests, should be further investigated.

Figure 2 - Participation Index Male/Female



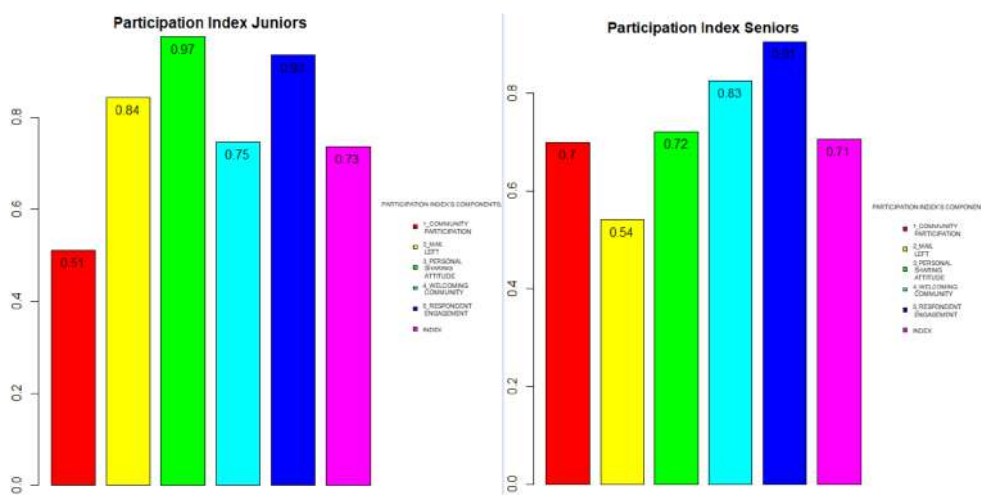
The graphs in Figure 3 illustrate the differences in the respondents’ availability to participate between juniors (respondents aged 15-34) and seniors (respondents aged 35 and more). While both have shown an extremely high rate of their own willingness to engage in tourism development by providing information, it is interesting to note that seniors think the community is open and welcoming to tourists more than juniors do. Furthermore, they also think that the community is willing to participate in tourism development to a much higher extent than juniors. It is hard to tell what stands behind such beliefs on both sides and whether this means that juniors are more critical towards their community as a whole or if their opinion is based solely on observing the way younger generations behave.

On the other hand, juniors are more willing to make use of sharing economy platforms to share something of their own with the visitors. This result does not necessarily mean that older residents are less willing to share something of their own with the tourist but depicts the fact that many of them are not digitally literate and do not know how to use computers and phones in order to access digital sharing economy platforms.

This argument is further supported by the fact that many older residents did not leave their emails in order to be contacted again during the next phases of EXCOVER project for one very simple reason – the

majority of respondents older than 65 do not have or use one. This way it is very hard for them to interact with the visitors digitally, let alone share something with them via online platforms. However, this does not mean that they do not want to be a part of the sharing economy. On the contrary, the elderly can make an invaluable contribution to tourism development by sharing their knowledge about the territory and its tradition, as well as different skills that visitors who look for authentic experience find desirable – e.g. how to make traditional bread or jam, or carpentry and gardening skills, to name only a few. Furthermore, finding ways to involve the seniors, especially those who are retired, might significantly improve their financial situation, while at the same time create a feeling of satisfaction for being active members of their community. However, in order to reach this, a digital gap must be bridged and one of the ways to do it is by reversed socialization, where juniors teach digital skills to seniors.

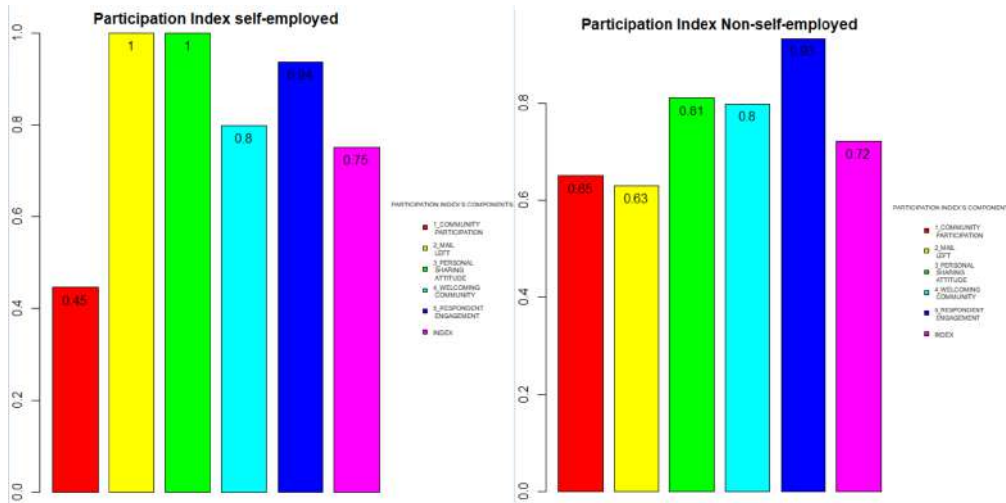
Figure 3 - Participation Index Juniors/Seniors



Although it is often assumed that entrepreneurs are adverse to sharing economy, because they might see it as a dangerous source of unfair competition, data collected in this survey show the opposite. It can be seen from graphs in Figure 4 that the self-employed respondents are all willing to make use of sharing economy platforms, as well as to be contacted during future phases of EXCOVER project, since all of them left their email addresses and expressed willingness to share something of their own with the visitors. This is probably due to their openness to further develop their own businesses which is an opportunity the EXCOVER project might offer them. Moreover, these respondents are more familiar with up-to-date

information on new ways of economic exchanges, as sharing economy platforms are one of the ways to expand and enrich their current businesses.

Figure 4 - Participation Index Employed/Self Employed



The graphs also show that the self-employed express quite a low rate of 0.45 when it comes to COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION. This shows their scepticism about organising a community towards reaching a common goal and might be based on their entrepreneurial experience in which they possibly did not get much support from their surroundings when starting or developing their businesses. During the survey conduct, some of the respondents mentioned jealousy among the citizens as one of the things that hinders the development of tourism in Gospić area, which might be one of the arguments to support the claim.

2. RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SHARING ECONOMY

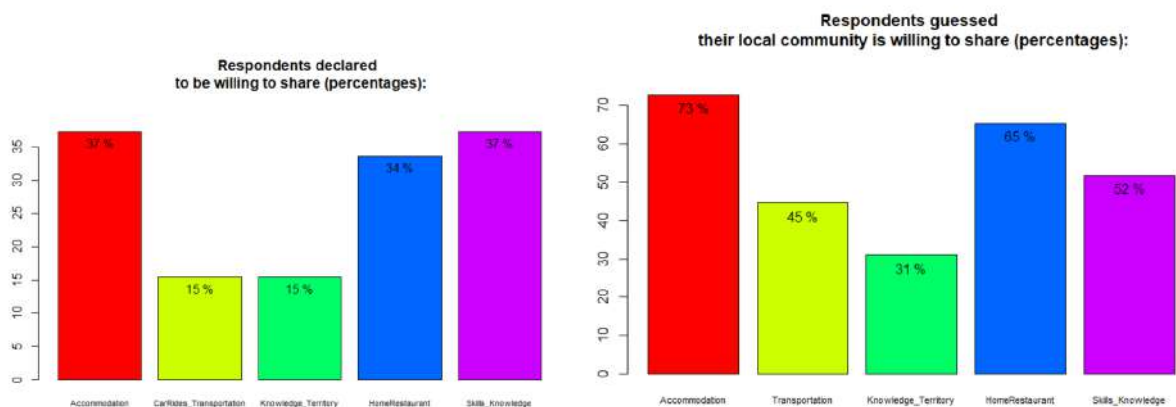
Since the EXCOVER aims at developing sustainable tourism in Gospić, where the local natural and cultural heritage constitute potential tourism attractions, but many tourist services and facilities are missing, a crucial phase of the project is dedicated to the construction or strengthening of the local supply chain. But the EXCOVER budget does not allow to make big investments for building accommodation structures, restaurants, transportation services and the like. Therefore, a pivotal idea of the project is to invite the local community to put into play their unused assets to deliver tourist services, by exploiting the new opportunities offered by the sharing economy. 'Sharing economy' means sharing something of a private's own with another person temporarily, in exchange for some money, through the web. Then, for the prosecution of the project, it is essential to understand on which private unused assets the construction of the supply chain can rely. To this aim, the SWOT questionnaire included 2 specific questions:

- In your opinion, what may your fellow villagers be willing to share?
- What would you share?

From the analysis of the respondents' answers, it emerges that the respondents think their local community is willing to share accommodation, with a rate of 73 %, home restaurant, with a rate of 65%, tourism-related knowledge and skills, with a rate of 52%, followed by transportation, with a rate of 45%, and territory knowledge with a rate of 31%, as shown in Figure 5.

When asked whether they themselves were willing to share something of their own, out of 108 respondents, 89 (82%) replied yes, while 19 (12%) replied no. The rates of what the respondents are willing to share show a 37% rate regarding their knowledge and skills and accommodation, followed by home restaurant with a rate of 34%, while transportation and territory knowledge both show a rate of 15%, also shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Willingness to share by individual/whole community



Although 73% of the respondents believe that their local community is willing to share accommodation, only 37% of them are willing to share it themselves. One of the explanations for this could be their low income since 59% of the respondents have net monthly income of less than 5000 kuna, which is below the average income in Croatia. Consequently, it is most probably difficult for them to invest money into renovating their accommodation facilities in order to adjust them for accommodating the tourists, let alone buy or build properties they could rent out. On the other hand, they have noticed a change in their surroundings when it comes to private accommodation facilities, especially since Airbnb and Booking have become popular, which increased the number of local home rentals. Another explanation for this could be respondents' mentality and lack of tourism experience, in which case they might still have some fears or discomfort related to sharing their own homes with strangers, or in this case – the tourists. One of the solutions for increasing the number of private accommodations could be to offer favourable loans or some kind of subsidies which would encourage more people to start renting their properties to tourists. On the other hand, education is the best tool for fighting unfounded fears or inexperience, which can be done by providing more information to the locals in a form of presentations, panel discussions, by using available media or by organizing different workshops and trainings, to only name a few.

In general, as shown in graphs in Figure 5, there are visible discrepancies between what the respondents declared to be themselves willing to share and what they think their fellow citizens may be available to share. It can be concluded that the respondents are less willing to share something of their own with the tourists than they think their fellow citizens are. Whether that means they consider themselves more narrow-minded or inexperienced than the majority or just less financially able to join the tourism sector, is to be further investigated. However, there seems to be enough openness towards sharing economy platforms, which is a good foundation for the prosecution of the EXCOVER project, especially since the majority of the residents believe that people from the region are willing to share different skills and knowledge, which is a great way of bringing together the locals and the visitors.

Whereas it might be challenging to improve the economic situation in the region, and it is a process that requires strategic planning and time to show the results, what tourism sector and the authorities can take into account from these surveys is the citizens' willingness to get involved, even if they can't share something material, such as transportation or accommodation. By sharing their skills and knowledge, the residents become one of the most important tourism ambassadors of their cities and villages, which is a good starting point.

However, their capacity to do so should be further investigated and a strategic plan for getting the citizens involved provided. Whether this would be in a form of organizing courses for the tourist guides or in a less formal way by organizing different workshops with the aim to teach the residents how to use their skills and knowledge when dealing with the tourist (e.g. storytelling workshops), should be decided. The residents' skills and knowledge, in combination with their willingness to share local cuisine with the visitors, could be a win-win for everyone, especially since nowadays tourists are looking for an authentic cultural experience, and spending more time with the locals could be one of the ways to get it. Since the current offer for these tourism services is quite scarce, getting the residents more involved should not

endanger the existing offer of the local businesses. On the contrary, by involving more citizens in the tourism services, the visitors would be able to choose among a variety of customized experiences and therefore the tourism offer would be enriched.

The same applies to sharing accommodation since the number of visitors is growing, which is why involving the residents in accommodation offering would have a positive effect. Moreover, nowadays tourists are not only looking for accommodation, but also for interaction with the locals, which is why many of them prefer finding accommodation via popular sharing platforms, rather than booking a room at a hotel. At the same time, there would always be those who prefer hotel accommodation, especially those tourists travelling in groups, and since there are not that many local hotels, there should not be any danger that the private accommodation will take over the business from the hotels.

When it comes to transportation, cities and villages in Lika are quite inadequately connected. For example, if a visitor wants to move from Otočac or Gospić in direction of the Plitvice Lakes, it is not possible to do it by public transport. Taken into consideration that many travellers do not visit Croatia by their own vehicles, sharing economy platforms, such as Blablacar or Uber, could be one of the solutions for improving connectivity in the region. Again, there is a scarce offer of both – public transport and private transport, which leaves enough room to get more citizens involved in this field.

3. SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

Although *Gospić* can lever on some tangible and intangible assets that are potentially attractive for tourists, to boost a sustainable tourism development, the tourism sector and its economic potential is still scarcely unfolded (as described in the Preparatory Local Report attached). Whence the need to deeply investigate how the local resources can be effectively employed to attract and create value for visitors, why they are not currently source of economic growth, which opportunities should be caught, also in terms of valorising underutilized or neglected assets, and which risks may arise. To this aim, the SWOT Analysis shown in the present Report was conducted.

The SWOT factors were identified through a semi-structured survey on the opinions of 108 residents, as the involvement of the locals is crucial to co-construct a tourism development consistent with their vision of the future of their own territory. The *face to face/phone* survey interviews were carried out 17-19 December 2019 throughout *Gospić area*, with a special focus on the city centre and sites of tourist attractions. The resulting SWOT matrix was discussed with policy makers, who assigned a relative importance score to each SWOT factor, so that the subsequent strategic interventions can be effectively prioritized and financial resources can be efficiently allocated. The resulting weighted SWOT matrix is reported below.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amazing wildlife and landscapes of national parks, rivers, caves, forests and mountains 2. Good geographical position and the vicinity of the Adriatic Sea 3. Worldwide popularity of Nikola Tesla 4. Local gastronomy 5. Peaceful atmosphere in small towns and villages 6. Good road connectivity 7. Social capital – traditional hospitality 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of promotion and poor branding of Lika 2. No networking among tourism stakeholders 3. Bad public transportation 4. Strong political bias 5. Lack of educated tourism staff 6. Lack of community participation 7. Poor condition of local and regional roads
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current trends in tourism 2. Availability of EU funds and projects 3. Digital marketing 4. Increase of traffic on highway A1 5. Sharing economy 6. Development of special tourism niches 7. EU Measures to start non-agricultural activities for family farmers 	<p>THREATS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Depopulation and ageing 2. Complicated bureaucracy 3. Complicated proprietary and legal relationships 4. Insufficiently harmonized laws 5. Migrant crisis 6. Consequences of the war 7. Mass tourism

3.1. STRENGTHS OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

Gospić is the administrative centre of Lika-Senj County, which is well-known for its beautiful landscapes and wildlife. Three out of eight Croatian national parks are in the territory of the county, as well as the largest and the most complex protected area in Croatia - the Velebit Nature Park. The residents see **nature** as the biggest strength for the development of local tourism, especially since there are already more than one million visitors coming to the Plitvice Lakes every year. That is why it is no wonder that many of the residents recognized the Plitvice Lakes as the most important natural resource for tourism development of Lika as a region. Besides the Plitvice Lakes, the residents named rivers, caves, forests, mountains and rich flora and fauna as key strengths for tourism development.

Located in between the capital in the north and Dalmatia in the south, Lika-Senj County has an excellent **geographical position**, because most of the visitors who want to go to the southern parts of Croatia go there via the County. This good strategic position is important for further development of Gospić as a centre of the County, and the vicinity of the Adriatic Sea is its advantage.

Nikola Tesla was recognized by the residents as the most important historical figure from Lika for attracting the tourists. Tesla was a genius who created many ground-breaking inventions and became famous worldwide for inventing the first alternating current (AC) motor and developing AC generation and transmission technology. He was born in Smiljan, a village nearby Gospić, where today there is a memorial centre dedicated to his life and work. However, during focus groups, it was pointed out several times that Tesla is more of untapped potential and that more effort should be put into branding this famous inventor as a part of Lika's heritage.

Next, the residents see **local gastronomy** as another strength factor, especially since they believe that the ingredients used for preparing local dishes are of very high quality, due to unpolluted soil and the geographical and climatic conditions. Moreover, certain food from the region has been recognized and protected for its geographic origin, such as Lika potatoes or *škripavac* cheese, which is a part of the List of the Protected Cultural Goods of the Republic of Croatia. Again, it was pointed out that these different **homemade products** need better promotion and branding so that they would be recognizable for their quality and origin and stand out when compared with their competition.

Considering the fact that the County is the largest and the least populated county in Croatia, **peaceful atmosphere** is another thing that the residents recognized as something tourist might appreciate a lot. For all of those who need a break from crowded cities and would prefer to spend holidays some place where you can still be woken up by noises roosters make early in the morning, villages in Lika are an ideal location to visit. Whether they prefer to simply relax and enjoy the quietness of the area or perhaps choose a more active way of spending their holidays by discovering different hiking and bike trails, in any case, the peaceful vast unpopulated area of Lika is an important resource for tourism development.

While on one hand, Lika has a good geographical position, being located in between the north and the south of Croatia, another thing that the residents have noticed is a **good road connectivity** with the rest of Croatia. This is due to the fact that the highway connecting the north and the south crosses the region. Moreover, D1 and D8 state roads connecting the north with the south go via the county, which are all important elements for tourism development.

One of the strengths can also be found in the **residents** themselves since the majority of them showed a willingness to share something of their own with the tourist. From accommodation to preparing local dishes, the residents are one of the key resources for the development of tourism, especially family farmers, who are among the main keepers of tradition in Lika. Moreover, Lika's residents are known for their hospitality, which is already recognized on sharing economy platforms for accommodation – such as Airbnb and Booking.

3.2. WEAKNESSES OF THE LOCAL TOURISM SYSTEM

The residents highlighted the **lack of promotion** as one of the main obstacles for tourism development. In general, Lika as a region has still not been successfully branded and neither has Gospić. There are few destinations in the region that are well-known abroad, such as the Plitvice Lakes or Velebit Mountain, whereas others are mostly invisible on the main tourist routes. Branding and promotion of Lika, and Gospić as its centre, is crucial at this point, and the locals noticed that it is quite difficult to find tourist information about certain parts of Lika.

Although it is visible that things are changing for better when it comes to tourism development in Lika, the residents pointed out how **different stakeholders in tourism are not connected, they do not communicate with each other and do not act collectively**, which hinders the development in tourism. During focus groups, several arguments were given to support this claim. It sometimes happens that there are two or more events happening around the same time (e.g. Christmas markets), and this way, instead of directing the small number of tourists to one location, they get dispersed and none of the organizers has much benefit from tourists. Instead of acting individually and planning things on their own, the residents believe much could be done if different stakeholders would join forces and act collectively towards the tourists.

Whereas good road connectivity was recognised as one of the important strengths, **bad public transport** not only hinders the development of tourism but also makes everyday life in Lika hard for its citizens. This means that neither the locals nor the tourists can move about Lika with ease by using public transport because the connection between Gospić and the neighbouring towns and villages or Gospić and the big cities in Croatia is very scarce or does not exist. For example, those tourists who visit the Plitvice Lakes cannot reach Gospić by public transport, as there is no connection, which could be one of the reasons why many of them skip Gospić and the rest of Lika after spending time at the Plitvice Lakes.

Strong political bias and **unsupportive local administration** hamper the development of tourism and the region in general. Nepotism, corruption and incompetent staff working for regional government or local authorities are often blamed by the citizens for the underdevelopment of the region. In other words, while politicians support some, they obstruct the progress of other tourism stakeholders. The residents emphasized the importance of politics for the development of the region in all its aspects and also deplored the fact that it is often the opposite.

Another huge obstacle for the development of tourism lies in the human resources. The residents pointed out that the **tourism staff** in Lika is still quite incompetent and **needs more tourism-related education** in order to know how to approach the tourists or what to offer them. Some of the residents suggested that the tourist boards should be more actively involved and also hire competent experts who could guide the local population in their involvement in the development of tourism. The locals believe it is crucial to educate young creative professionals in the field of tourism and tourism-related areas, but also that the real tourism development is not possible without residents' involvement.

Moreover, the interviewees were critical towards themselves, emphasizing that the **residents themselves need to change** and become more active, as well as have more awareness of the local values. During the focus groups it could be heard that oftentimes when an event is organised by local authorities or tourist boards, it is very difficult to find local volunteers who would help to carry it out. It was also pointed out that the problem of not enough engagement of residents lies in lack of tourism-related information, which should be better spread by key tourism stakeholders. Furthermore, both raising awareness of the local values and increasing motivation for working with the tourists could be encouraged if the existing institutions would put more effort into educating the residents about tourism-related topics.

Lastly, not only is the public transportation very poor, but also **the condition of local and regional roads**. The residents see this as another factor that hinders the development of tourism. On one hand, it makes mobility around region slower and exhausting, while on the other hand, it also leaves a very bad impression on tourists and does not contribute to creating a positive destination image.

3.3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Regarding **current trends in tourism** as opportunities, there are many. First of all, the number of tourists visiting Croatia is increasing, and with this number constantly growing, it is an opportunity to further develop the tourism in Lika. Due to globalization, Lika has become more available to tourists and it is more widely recognized as a destination that provides a perfect city break, where either solo travellers or those travelling in groups can come to enjoy its amazing landscapes and wildlife and peaceful surroundings. Since ecotourism as a sustainable way of travelling is gaining popularity, Gospić can use this as an opportunity to establish itself as a destination that offers various opportunities for conscious travellers. Moreover, local experience is another growing trend, which means that the tourists do not want to stay in their own isolated cultural box when visiting new destinations but prefer to participate in the local culture. This is another opportunity to bear in mind when developing new tourism products, e.g. how to celebrate local culture at different festivals or promote local organic cuisine.

The fact that Croatia is a part of the EU is recognized as another opportunity because it enables easier access to the international market and also offers **the possibility of getting financial support for investments from EU funds**. This means that EU grants are recognized as something which could boost tourism development and help involve more residents as active stakeholders in the whole process.

Digital marketing was recognized as an opportunity that must be used in order to promote Lika better. Whereas in the past tourism industry had limited ways of advertising, based mostly on ads on TV or in newspapers and travel magazines, nowadays, with the popularity and widespread of the Internet, it is far easier to reach different target groups, without having to personally hand out a single printed brochure.

The increase of traffic on highway A1 is seen as another opportunity since the highway connecting the north and the south crosses Lika region. With its growth of traffic of around 6% in 2019, according to reports by HUKA (Croatian Association of Toll Motorway Concessionaires), the residents during the focus groups pointed out how this is an enormous opportunity for tourism development and more time and effort should be put into finding ways to attract tourists to come down from the highway and visit Lika on their way towards the north or the south.

With **sharing economy** becoming more popular nowadays, the residents see it as another opportunity, especially when it comes to citizens' involvement in tourism development. Moreover, it could also solve some of the existing issues, such as lack of accommodation or public transport. Sharing economy platforms enable residents to become active stakeholders in tourism and help its development, while at the same time increasing their income.

By **developing special tourism niches**, tourists might be brought to undiscovered destinations that Lika has plenty of. The residents believe that mass tourism does not have the ability to satisfy people's desires for new experiences. Instead of treating the visitors as passive observers, tourism stakeholders should focus on enabling them to dive into the new experience connected with local customs, and

cuisine, just to name some. In order to do this, special tourism niches should be developed that would offer a unique experience, e.g. rural, active, sustainable, family, health and religious tourism. Some of the undiscovered places that the residents recognized as potential tourist attractions, could offer that unique experience tourists are looking for. For example, breath-taking **Kosinj Bridge** will take tourists to a village where the first books in Croatia were printed. Being the region with the least light pollution, Lika is a perfect place to observe the sky at night, which can be done in **Korenica Observatory**. Very close to it there is **Željava Air Base**, one of the largest underground military airports in Europe, which has been abandoned for many years and is often a destination for visitors who love going off the beaten path.

Another opportunity that emerged during focus groups' discussions was that there **are measures to start non-agricultural activities for the family farmers**. This way, family farmers are given an opportunity to increase their regular income by offering activities that do not only include farming, while it is also a way to offer even more authentic experience of rural Lika to tourists.

3.4. THREATS TO TOURIST DEVELOPMENT

Being the least populated county in Croatia, Lika-Senj County is facing a problem of **depopulation** and **ageing**. It is indeed one of the most challenging threats not only in the County but in Croatia as a whole. Strong depopulation trend, due to a deficit of births relative to deaths as well as immigration, is strongly connected with the fact that the pace of population ageing is much faster than ever in the past. This means that there is a big chance that in near future there will not be enough local people who could be in charge of tourism development, and if the negative trends continue, there will be lack of local workforce.

Complicated proprietary and legal relationships are seen as another threat, especially since the judiciary in Croatia is quite slow in solving these matters. This means that it can take years before it is determined who the actual owners of a property are, and since often there can be more than 10 owners of one property, to summon them together and agree on using the property for tourism-related purposes could be extremely difficult to do. It is no wonder that, according to EU Justice Scoreboard¹ released in Brussels in April 2019, in terms of perceived independence of courts and judges among the general public, the judiciary in Croatia scored worst among the European Union member states.

Another significant threat to the development of tourism in Gospić is of the administrative kind. Croatia is well-known for its long and tiresome **bureaucracy** which often hinders investments. This means that in order to start any kind of business, one usually needs to visit numerous offices and get different certificates, which is the reason why many people lose their motivation before they even start. Related

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/upholding-rule-law/eu-justice-scoreboard_en

to this, the residents claim that **the laws are not sufficiently harmonized**. For example, in order to do something in the tourism industry, one would have to deal with unharmonized laws in the fields of construction, finance and economy, to name a few.

European **migrant crisis**, also known as refugee crises, has recently started affecting Lika, because many of the migrants try to reach Western Europe by illegally crossing the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, therefore entering the territory of the County, which became a part of the Balkan migratory route.

Although the Croatian War of Independence ended in 1995, **the consequences of the war** are still visible. On one hand, there are still objects destroyed or damaged during the war which have not been rebuilt or renovated. On the other hand, a much bigger threat are minefields, since Lika-Senj County is one of the most affected areas in Croatia.

Finally, when it comes to tourism trends, some of the residents highlighted **mass tourism** as one of the threats. There have been numerous studies on the environmental impacts of tourism and it is extremely challenging to achieve a high level of sustainable eco-tourism once a destination attracts a huge number of visitors. Since untouched nature, wildlife and almost no pollution are one of the biggest strengths for tourism development in Lika, mass tourism is consequently one of the biggest threats because it could gradually destroy these natural resources on which tourism in Lika depends. Some of the respondents connected this fear with a lack of clear and practicable strategy for tourism development in Lika and Croatia as a whole.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the face-to-face interviews, focus groups and capacity building seminars, the residents gave many insights that are important for the prosecution and development of the EXCOVER project. The EXCOVER project aims at improving the residents' life and economic conditions through the development of sustainable tourism. Throughout this process, the participation of the local community is fundamental, and the residents' willingness to participate in the EXCOVER project has been affirmed.

First of all, the residents have shown an extremely high level of motivation for their own engagement in the local tourism development by providing information. Moreover, they are willing to share something of their own with the tourists, which is a great foundation for further development of sharing economy in the area.

The local community sees itself as welcoming, meaning the residents are hospitable and receptive towards the tourist. This influences the image tourists create about the destination and has a positive effect on their overall satisfaction with the tourist experience.

The majority of the respondents left their email addresses, which shows their openness and willingness to be further involved in the EXCOVER project, being another important signal for the successful prosecution of the EXCOVER project.

However, one should bear in mind that community participation had the lowest score, indicating that there might be certain obstacles in the willingness of the local community to jointly participate in the local tourist development, although, with a rate of 0.63, it is still positive. This might suggest that more effort should be put in informing, motivating, uniting and engaging the community towards reaching a common goal – improving their lives and economic conditions, while preserving the local cultural identity and environmental resources, through the development of sustainable tourism.

The results of the surveys show that the residents are willing to share accommodation and their skills and knowledge with the visitors. Home restaurant also got high score, which is possibly related to general hospitality the residents show towards the visitors, and it is a part of their tradition to welcome the visitors with food and drinks. By sharing their skills and knowledge and local cuisine, the residents become important tourism ambassadors of their cities and villages, which is extremely valuable for tourism development of the area. In fact, with local gastronomy being recognized as one of the key strengths, involving the citizens in preparation and serving of local dishes might significantly improve the existing offer.

Concerning sharing economy digital platforms, the residents were most familiar with those connected with accommodation sharing, since platforms like Airbnb recently gained worldwide popularity and the number of residents offering this type of service in the area is growing. By sharing rooms, apartments and houses, the locals offer more personalized service to the visitors, which usually includes their own face-to-face interaction with the tourists, therefore offering the tourists a unique experience of getting to know the territory through the eyes of their hosts. Both, knowledge about the territory and especially natural attractions, as well as knowledge about cultural heritage, are important as nature was without any doubt seen as the biggest strength of the region, whereas Nikola Tesla was recognized as paramount cultural factor that should be used more for attracting the tourists.

Taking into consideration the findings of these surveys, it can be concluded that the EXCOVER project has a great potential for creating a positive change in the local community towards a bigger familiarity and involvement of the residents with sharing economy. This can be done by providing more information on different possibilities of citizens' involvement in sharing economy, which also has a potential for solving some of the existent weaknesses. For example, encouraging more residents to share their cars with others while travelling around, could decrease the problem of poor public transportation services in the region.

In general, it can be concluded that the respondents showed a clear intention to participate in the local tourism development, and one way of doing this is by developing the sharing economy. This way, the residents might increase their chances of getting an extra income, while satisfying tourists' needs for personalized approach and authentic experience through contact with the local community.

Furthermore, some steps towards enhancing communication and collaboration between local institutions, stakeholders and citizens have already been made during capacity building seminars. Since poor networking was recognized as one of the biggest weaknesses for tourism development in Lika, the prosecution of this project should go in direction of creating more possibilities for networking and sharing information and visions about tourism development. This project has the potential for bringing people together and using social capital for everyone's benefit. It is also one of the ways to tackle the possible challenge with community participation, and one of the ways to do this is to actively involve the residents in all phases of tourism development so that they can feel the importance of their own contribution. Instead of being passive observers who have to put into practice guidelines someone else created, this way by sharing their valuable opinion and experience they become an active force in creating a positive change in the community.

With the focus of this project on preserving the local cultural identity and environmental resources, the residents can be shown ways how to shape and offer this authentic cultural experience to the visitors. Since tourism facilities are in general not well-developed throughout the region, involving more citizens in tourism development should not be a threat to the existing offer of local businesses. On the contrary, since the entrepreneurs are also willing to take part in the project and see it as a chance to improve their existent businesses, in this context, the residents can be seen as their allies and not competition. However, how fruitful this collaboration between the entrepreneurs, the citizens and the institutions will be, time will tell.

When it comes to recognized opportunities, nature as its biggest strength can be used for following current tourism trends and developing special tourism niches oriented towards active, eco, family, or health tourists. This way, tourists will be given a possibility to visit many currently undiscovered destinations, which will enable their economic development. The residents have recognised digital marketing as one of the ways to better promote and brand Lika as a tourist destination and they see the increase of traffic on highway A1 as another important chance for attracting more tourists because the highway crosses the region. However, one of the things the residents think should be improved is the condition of local and regional roads. Although Gospić and the County as a whole have a good geographical position and connectivity with the rest of Croatia, damaged roads might push tourists away from discovering some parts of Lika.

One of the ways to foster tourism development is by getting grants from EU funds, while measures to start non-agricultural activities for family farmers are yet another opportunity to enlarge the tourism offer with new services. The residents think that not only networking among tourism stakeholders is important, but also educating the population more about tourism and hiring more tourism experts. Another significant weakness the respondents recognized is a strong political bias, and it can be concluded that the residents often perceive the politicians as those who hinder the development of tourism rather than encouraging it.

How to tackle the recognized threats is quite difficult to tell, since the citizens in most cases do not have any influence on them. For example, complicated bureaucracy and proprietary and legal relationships or insufficiently harmonized laws are a matter of state, and so is the migrant crisis, which is the most recent threat to tourism development since the migrant route goes across the County. The state is already putting much effort to improve the situation in these areas, as well as in cleaning the remaining landmines from the last war, but all these processes take time to see the effect.

The biggest recognized threats are long-term depopulation and population ageing, which are processes that might be slowed down and changed by the economic development of the region, and tourism can play one of the most important parts. And lastly, much can be done in order to prevent mass tourism

from having a negative environmental impact, especially by developing new tourism niches oriented towards sustainable tourism and this way preserve and protect the existing natural resources.

To conclude, involving more citizens in sharing economy could improve the destination image and bring more tourists to small towns and villages of the region which would benefit everyone. In order to do this, many steps should be taken and one of the first is to get the residents familiar with different sharing economy options, as this could pay off significantly in the long run by increasing the income of the local population while enabling authentic local experience for the tourists.

EXCOVER – LOCAL REPUTATION ANALYSIS

GOSPIĆ

REPORT MADE BY LOGOTEAM D.O.O., RIJEKA

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1. INTRODUCTION TO REPUTATION ANALYSIS

Gospić participates in the EXCOVER Project with the objective of developing sustainable tourism as a privileged driver of economic growth, because currently, tourist inflows are scarce, well below the potential level that local resources could be able to attract. Therefore, in order to devise an effective strategy to make Gospić a popular tourism destination, it is necessary to understand why much people do not choose it as a destination for their trips and vacations, and what changes could enhance its tourist attractiveness. In particular, the focus is on:

- how (little) popular Gospić is,
- which aspects it is better known for,
- with what it is associated in the thought of people from different countries,
- how potential visitors perceive it
- what dissuades them from visiting,
- what is the idea that tourists get from experiencing the destination.

To investigate the collective judgments of both potential and actual tourists about Gospić as a tourism destination, a demand-based Reputation Analysis is carried out. The object of investigation is the reputation of the area that it encompasses, to a certain extent, the construct of satisfaction with regard to actual tourists (to be induced to revisit), but it is measurable also with reference to just potential visitors (the main target to be attracted to develop the local tourism sector). Moreover, it has been shown that a favourable reputation can positively influence the image of a destination¹ (that is conveyed to the general public of potential visitors), the perception of its value and the tourists' loyalty².

The current Reputation Analysis relies on both direct (based on sample surveys) and indirect (web-based) approaches. This report examines different information from multiple sources:

¹Marinao, E., Torres, E., Chasco, C. (2012). Trust in tourist destinations. The role of local inhabitants and institutions. *Acad. Rev. Latinoam. Adm.* 51, 27–47.

²Christou, E. (2007). Tourist destinations as brands: the impact of destination image and reputation on visitor loyalty. In: Keller, P., Bieger, T. (Eds.), *Productivity in Tourism: Fundamentals and Concepts for Achieving Growth and Competitiveness*. Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin, pp. 57–67.

- Google Trends,
- Survey interviews to visitors of Zagreb and Rijeka,
- Survey interviews to tourists in Gospić.

2. GOOGLE TRENDS ANALYSIS

In order to assess how much Gospić is actually (un)known at both the national and international level, what it is associated with in the view of the general public and how popular local attractions are, data from Google Trends were analysed (period of the execution: 30 December 2019 – 16 January 2020). Google Trends is a search trends feature that allows to see how often specific keywords, subjects and phrases have been queried over a specific period of time, by showing the frequency with which a given term is entered into Google's search engine, relative to the site's total search volume, based on a sample of Google searches.

The search terms, used in the analysis, are the following:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| - Gospić | - Jesen u Lici | - Hotel Ana Gospić |
| - Lika | - Eko-etno Gacka | - Hotel Stara Lika |
| - Lika-Senj County | - Advent u Otočcu | - Eco camp Rizvan City |
| - Velebit | - Prosinac u Gospiću | - Linden Tree Retreat and Ranch |
| - Lake Krušćica | - lički krumpir | - Lika rat |
| - Pećinski park Grabovača | - lička janjetina | - Lika mine |
| - River Lika | - škripavac | - Lika imigranti |
| - Velebit Nature Park | - sir basa | - Jadovno concentration camp |
| - Northern Velebit | - lička rakija | - Nikola Tesla |
| - Paklenica National Park | - Memorial Center Nikola Tesla | - Ante Starčević |
| - Plitvice Lakes National Park | - Kuća Velebita | - Marijan Matijević |
| | - Muzej Gacke | - Miroslav Kraljević |
| | - Muzej Like | |

For each search word, along with the global search volume, the following categories were taken into account:

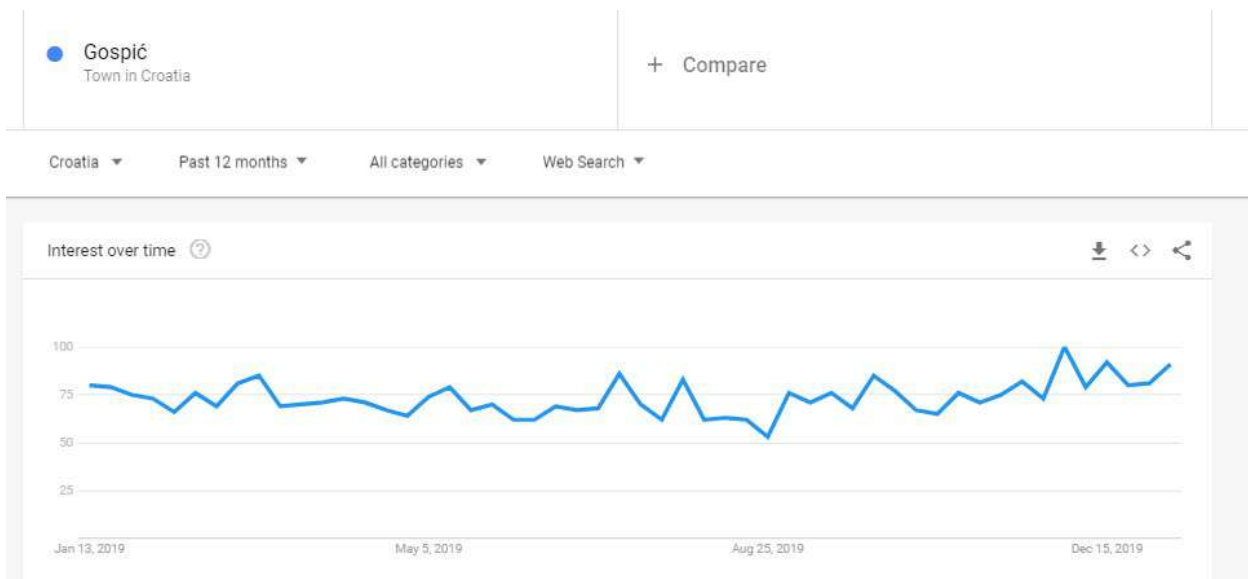
- Arts & Entertainments,
- Beauty & Fitness,
- Books & Literature,
- Business & Industrial,
- Food & Drinks,
- Games,
- Hobbies & Leisure,
- Jobs & Education,
- Shopping,
- Sport,
- Travel.

Searches run from the following countries were analysed:

- Croatia,
- All the neighbouring countries,
- Worldwide.

Gospić: The dynamics of the search term **Gospić**, as illustrated in figure 1, show a constant level of its popularity from January 2019 until December 2019 in Croatia in all categories with a slight increase in December 2019.

Figure1 - Gospić - popularity in Croatia over the past 12 months



As far as the geographical distribution of the popularity of the search term at the sub-regional level is concerned, most of the queries come from Lika-Senj County, as shown in figure 2, or to be more precise from Gospić area itself, as shown in figure 3. That explains why Top related queries are not those connected with tourism, but more with everyday life, such as the weather forecast for Gospić, or information about the general hospital in Gospić, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 2- Gospić - popularity in Croatia over the past 12 months; interest by subregion - counties

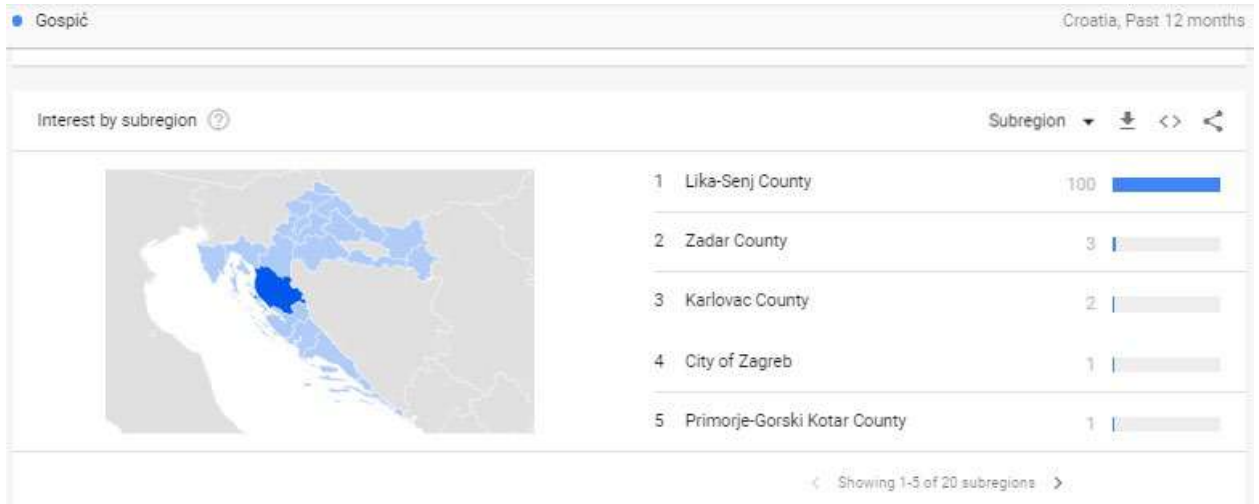


Figure 3- Gospić - popularity in Croatia over the past 12 months - interest by subregion- cities

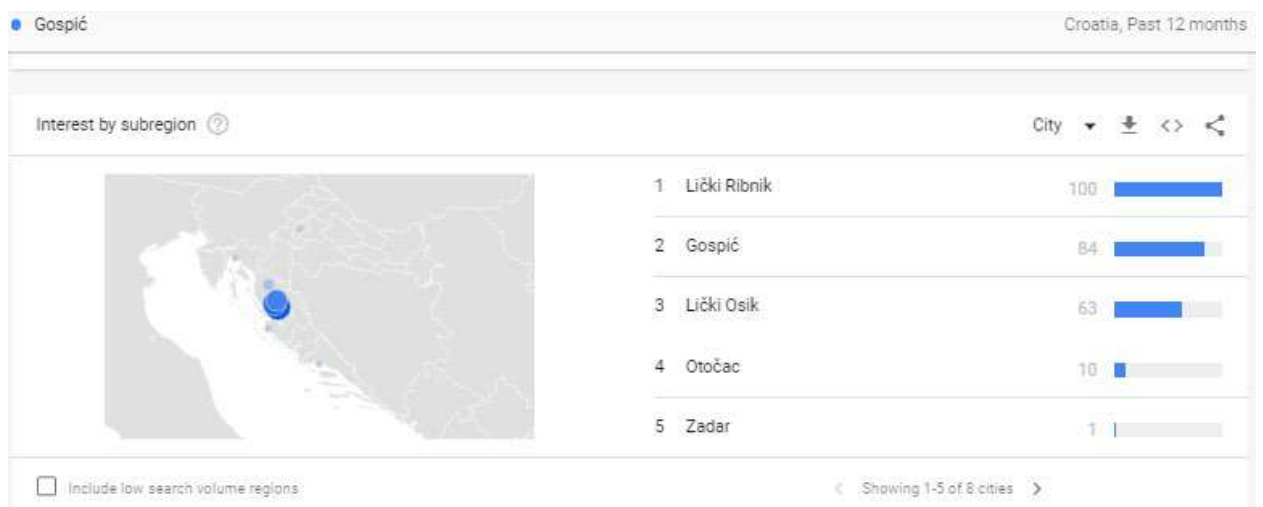
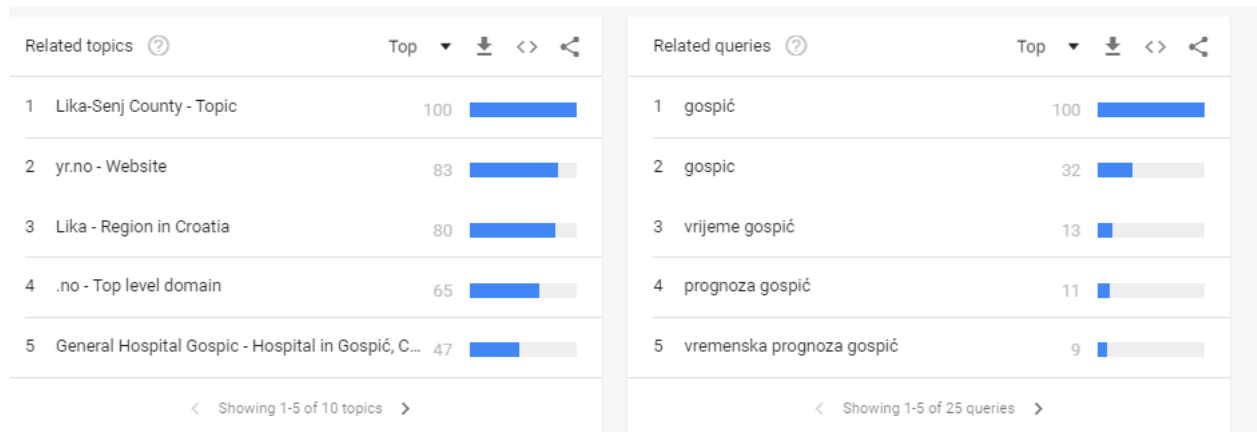


Figure 4- Gospić - Top queries (Croatia over the past 12 months)



In the worldwide search during the last 12 months, the search term Gospić had a low rate of popularity. Besides Croatia, Gospić was popular mostly in the neighbouring countries, as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5 - Gospić - worldwide popularity over the past 12 months

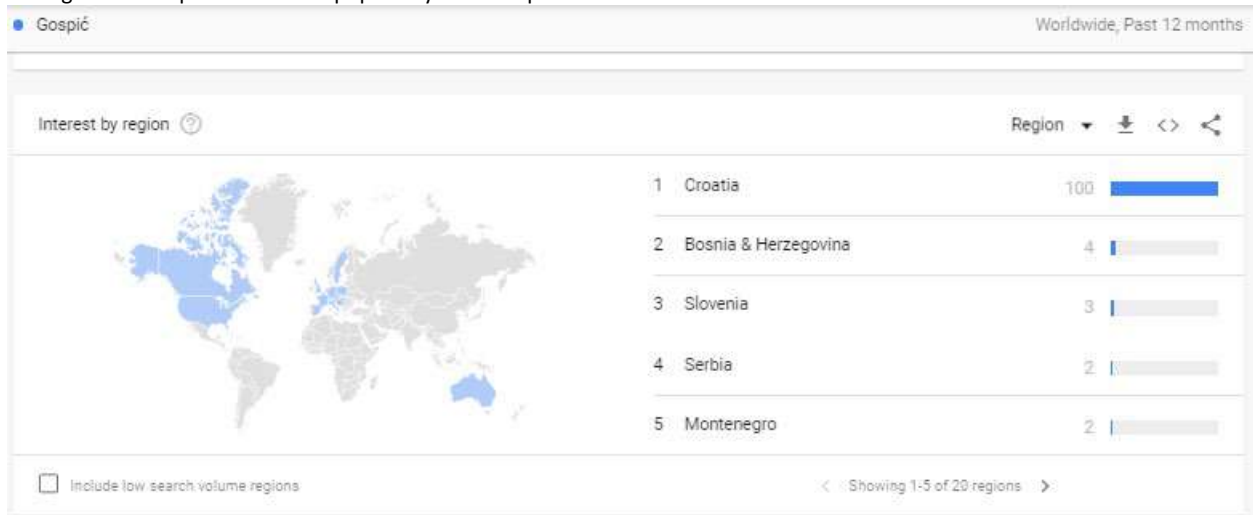
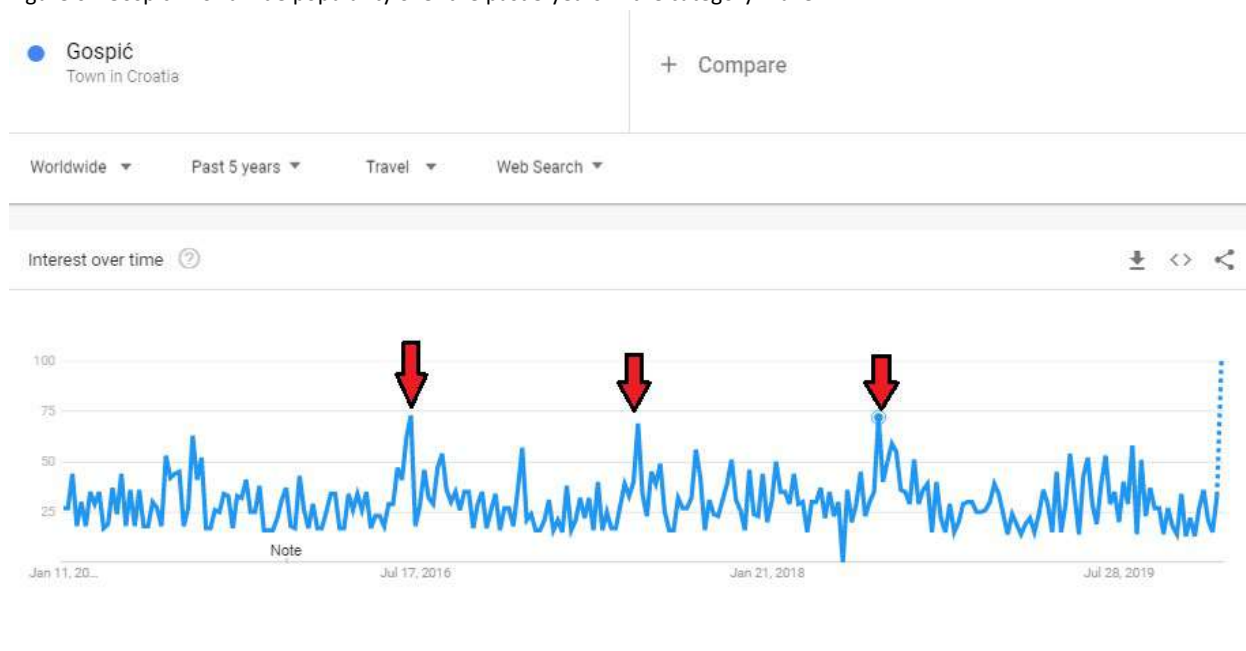


Figure 6 shows that the peak interest for the keyword Gospić in the category of **Travel** worldwide during the past 5 years is usually in July, which coincides with the fact that most tourists visit Croatia during summer months. In general, there was very little interest for Gospić in this category, especially

during the winter season, which Gospić might use to its advantage by becoming a winter tourism destination.

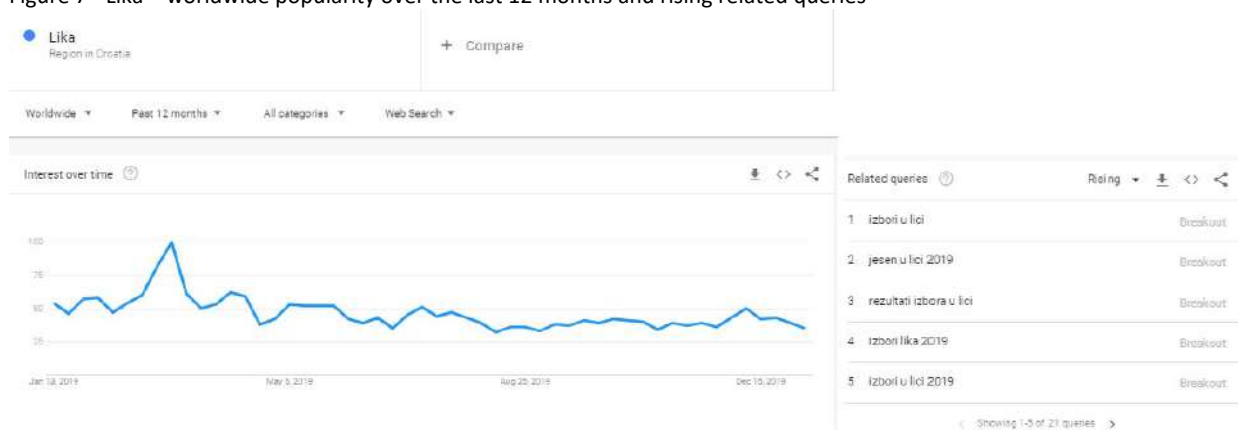
Figure 6 - Gospić- worldwide popularity over the past 5 years in the category Travel



Gospić is the administrative centre of Lika-Senj County, the largest and the least populated county in Croatia. Out of eight national parks in Croatia, three are in the territory of the county, as well as the largest and the most complex protected area in Croatia - the Velebit Nature Park. Research was done in order to find out whether the County or the region called Lika are recognized as tourist destinations, especially among those tourists who love outdoor activities. Both keywords were used - Lika and Lika-Senj County.

The search done worldwide for the last 12 months in all categories shows very low popularity of the keyword **Lika**, as illustrated in figure 7. As with the keyword Gospić, Lika has the highest popularity in Croatia, followed by the neighbouring countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Similar and yet worse results are indicated for the keyword **Lika-Senj County**, which shows that the name of the region is more popular than the name of the county. Consequently, almost identical results were found when the same keywords **Lika** and **Lika-Senj County** were analysed for the geographical area of Croatia over the past 12 months. The popularity reached its peak in March, which coincides with the local elections, as named in Related queries.

Figure 7 - Lika – worldwide popularity over the last 12 months and rising related queries



Worldwide search for keywords **Lika** and **Lika-Senj County** in the categories **Travel** and **Food and Drink** showed very low worldwide popularity, with related queries that mostly had no connection to tourism, while in the category **Outdoors** related topic was hunting, which might suggest some interest in Lika as a destination for hunting tourism.

When the same two keywords were searched in all categories and above-mentioned sub-categories for Croatia, Rural tourism appeared as one of the topics in related topics, which might suggest that Lika has been recognized as an agritourism destination. As with the keyword Gospić, the great majority of interest for keywords Lika and Lika-Senj County comes from the county itself.

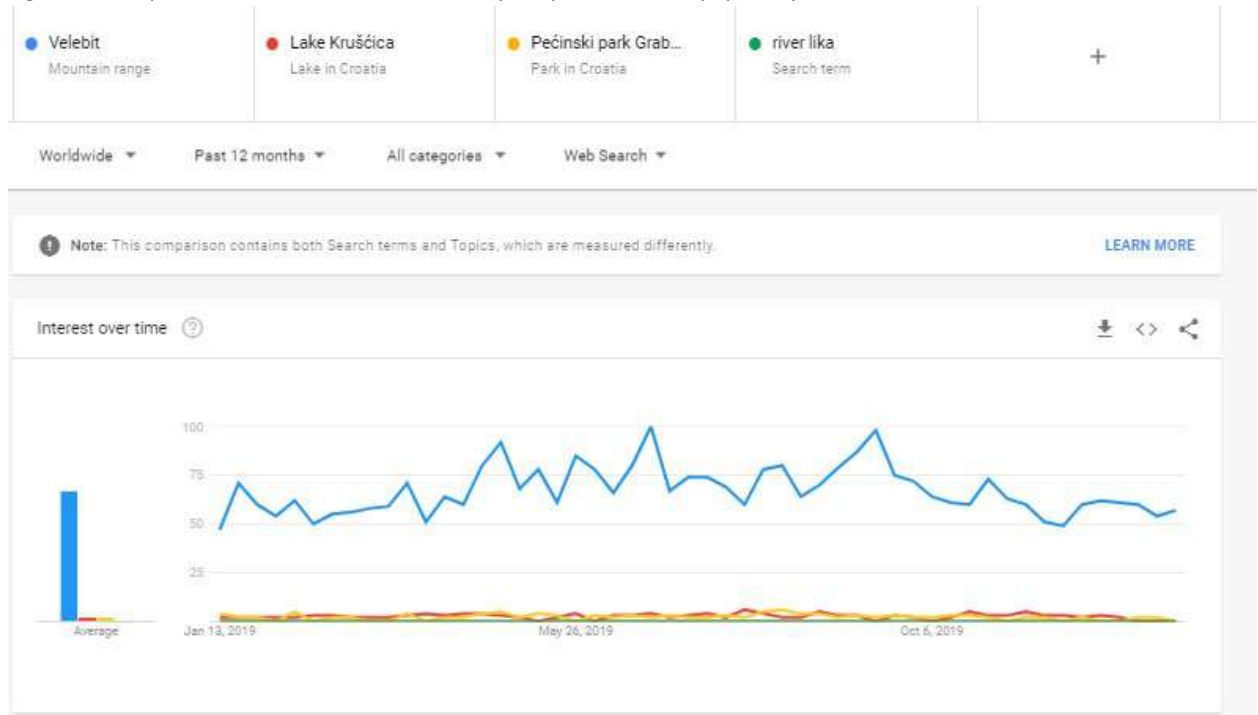
Velebit + Lake Kruščica + Pećinski park Grabovača + River Lika

There are lots of natural areas surrounding Gospić which have the potential to attract tourists who are looking for experiences connected with the natural environment. **The River Lika**, Cave Park **Grabovača**, **Lake Kruščica** and mountain range **Velebit** are ideal destinations for those tourists who love to spend active holidays, e.g. going cycling, hiking, kayaking, etc. The aim of this research was to see how popular these attractions are outside the Lika area.

The graph reported in figure 8 shows the frequency of searched keywords, the geographical area is set at worldwide, the time filter is set over the past 12 months and there are no filters for category. It shows that the only relatively popular keyword was Velebit, reaching its peak popularity from May till September when most outdoor lovers go hiking. Other three destinations are still quite unknown,

especially the River Lika, which indicates a need for stronger tourism promotion and developing activities visitors could do at these destinations.

Figure 8 - Comparison of natural attractions nearby Gospić- worldwide popularity over the last 12 months



Again, the highest interest for these keywords was in Croatia, followed by the neighbouring countries: Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the interest was quite low.

The same comparison for the geographical area of Croatia gives similar results in popularity over the last 12 months, while compared breakdown for sub-region shows popularity of Velebit in almost all Croatian counties.

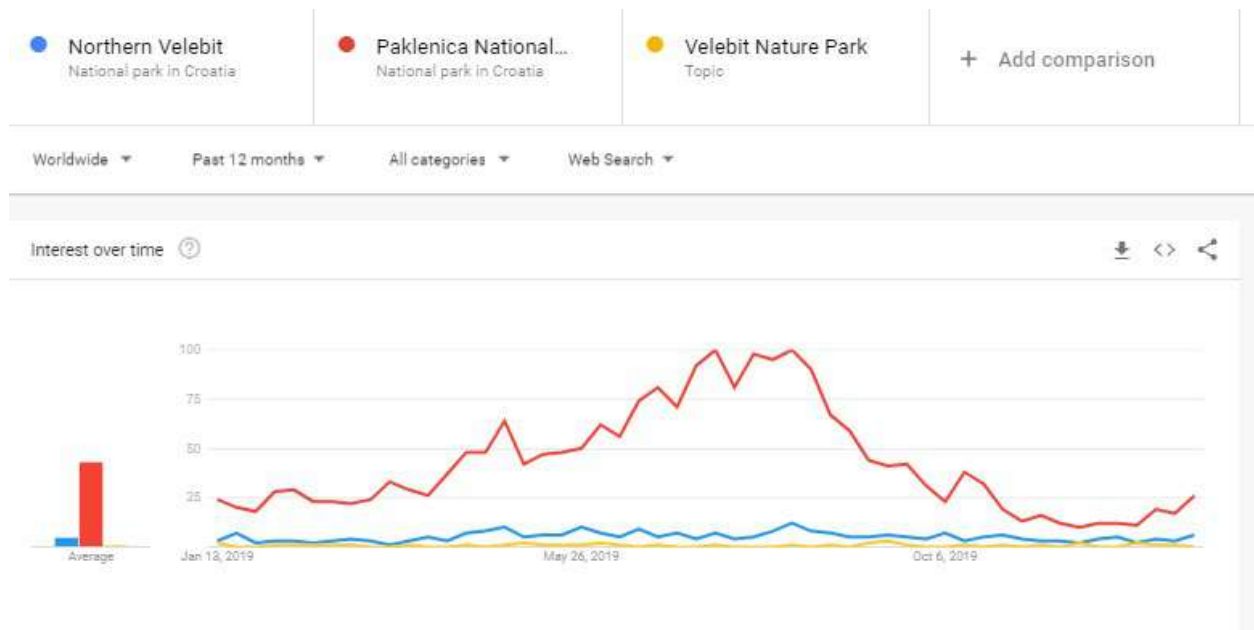
Velebit Nature Park + Northern Velebit + Paklenica National Park

Velebit is the largest mountain range in Croatia, separating Lika from the Adriatic coast. It is a perfect destination for all the travellers who seek active and adventurous holidays, doing activities such as hiking, climbing and mountaineering. The entire mountain range is protected under the name

Velebit Nature Park, while there are also two national parks as a part of the range, called **Northern Velebit** and **Paklenica**.

The popularity of these three keywords was compared worldwide over the last 12 months, as shown in figure 9. The most popular keyword is Paklenica National Park, whose popularity is seasonal, reaching its peak in summer months, when most visitors go hiking and rock climbing. The worldwide interest in these destinations is not only limited to Croatia and neighbouring countries but spreads to other (mostly European) countries, such as Slovakia and Czechia. These results suggest the need to strengthen the promotion and marketing activities for the whole mountain range and offer experiences which would include exploration of both national parks, as well as the other parts of the mountain, which are protected as a part of Velebit Nature Park, which as a search term is still quite unknown to the worldwide general public.

Figure 9 – Comparison of Velebit Nature Park with Northern Velebit and Paklenica National Park- worldwide over the last 12 months



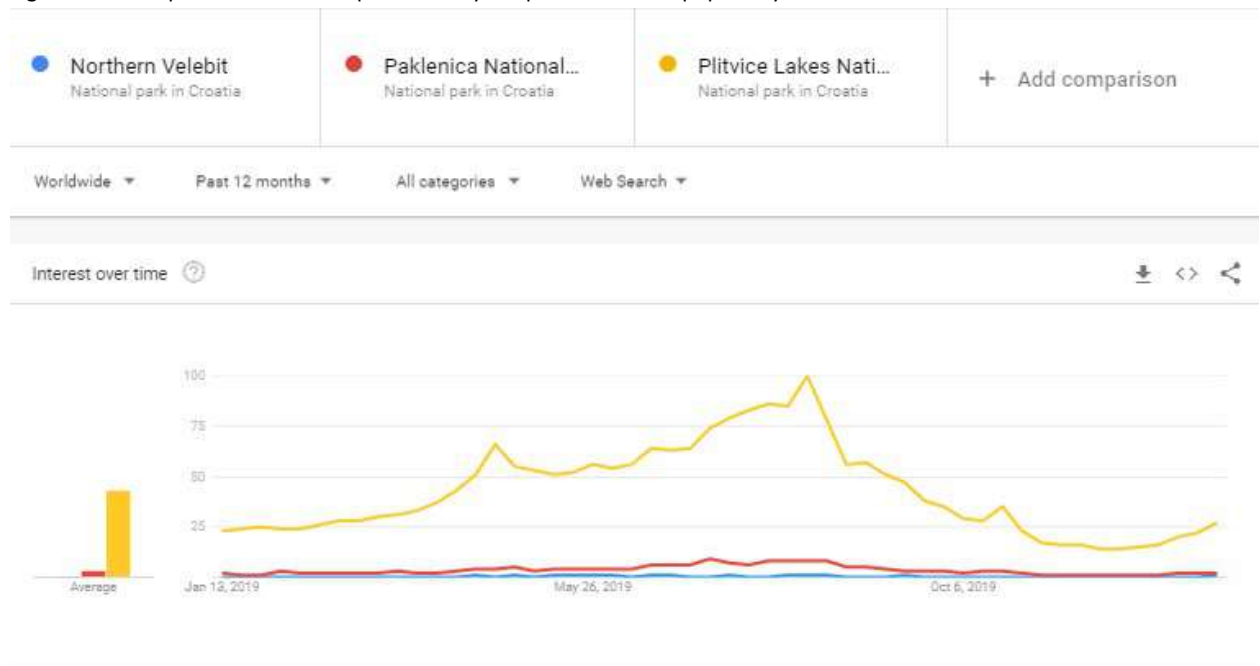
Northern Velebit + Paklenica National Park + Plitvice Lakes National Park

Being the oldest and the biggest national park in Croatia, and recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 1979, the **Plitvice Lakes** is also the most visited national park in Croatia, attracting around one million visitors a year. This comparison aims to analyse the popularity of **Paklenica** and **Northern Velebit** in comparison with the Plitvice Lakes, which is a well-known destination with a

strong reputation. All three national parks are within an 80 km radius from Gospić and their popularity could be used to attract more visitors to Gospić. The graph reported in figure 10 shows the frequency of searched keywords, the geographical area is set to worldwide, the time filter is set over the past 12 months and the search is done in all categories.

The results of the data analysis present the Plitvice Lakes as the most popular keyword, and also show its seasonal popularity, reaching its peak in the first half of August. Since other two national parks show relatively low popularity when compared with the Plitvice Lakes, Gospić might use this fact to its advantage by trying to attract visitors who come to the Plitvice Lakes and prolong their stay in Lika-Senj County by offering new experiences in its vicinity.

Figure 10 – Comparison of national parks nearby Gospić - worldwide popularity over the last 12 months



Jesen u Lici

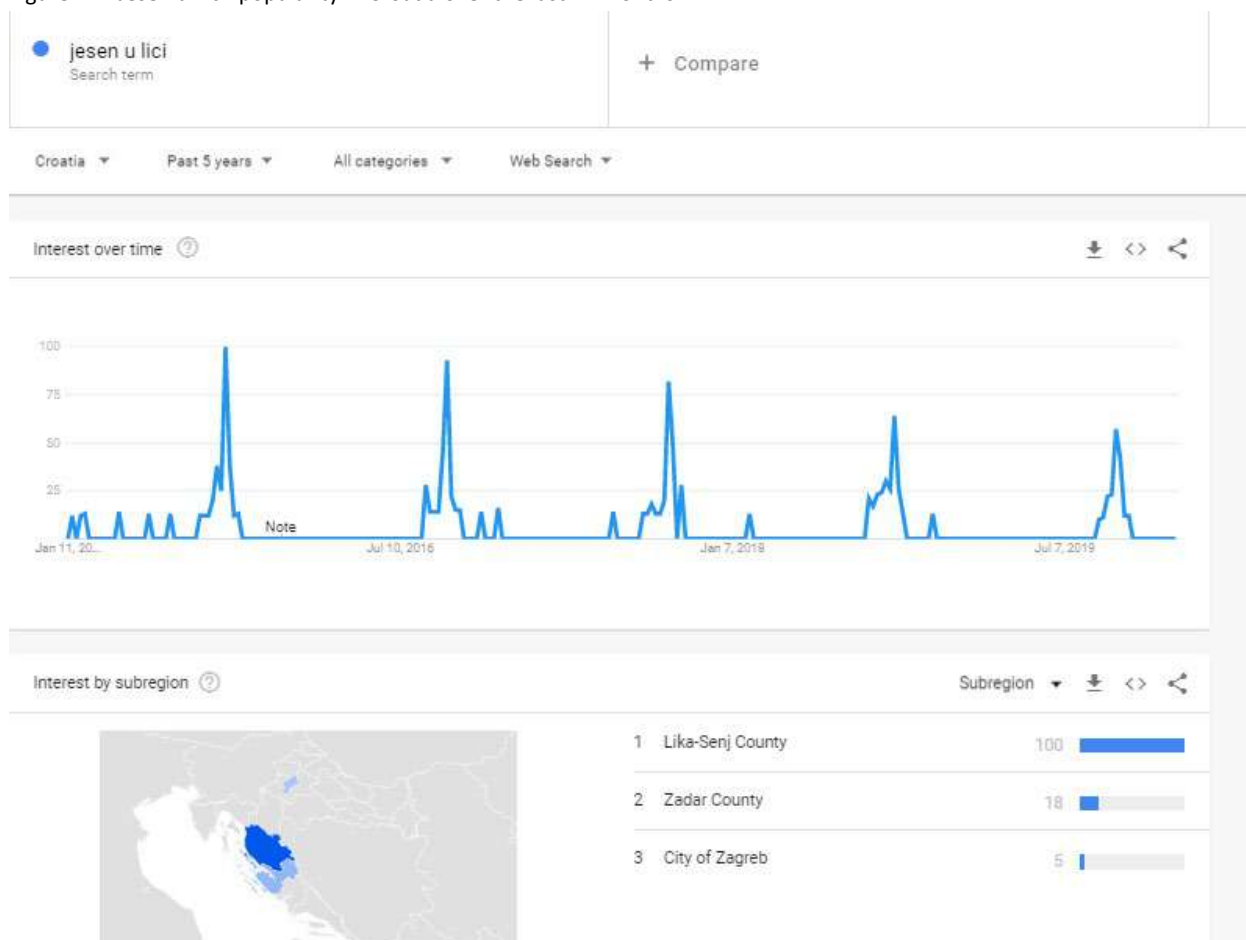
Jesen u Lici is the biggest annual cultural and tourist event in Lika region, during which the visitors can discover various traditional and agricultural products, and get an insight into Lika's traditional handicrafts, customs and history. For the last 21 years, it has been a unique place for the local family farmers to present their products. It also puts focus on intangible cultural heritage, presenting

traditional music and customs from the region. The event takes place in Gospić at the beginning of October and is a great opportunity to attract tourists looking for experiences connected with local gastronomy. The data analysis was conducted in order to investigate the intensity of interest and popularity of Jesen u Lici. The geographical area is set to Croatia; the time filter is set over the past 5 years in all categories.

Despite its 21 years-long tradition, the graph reported in figure 11 shows a slight decrease in popularity of search term Jesen u Lici during a 5-year period. The results show that the popularity of the search term is limited only to three counties in Croatia, and the neighbouring Zadar County shows the highest interest by subregion, right after Lika-Senj County, with the popularity peak at the end of September and the beginning of October, when the event takes place.

Jesen u Lici was compared with three other events happening in the region. **Eko-Etno Gacka** is a summer gastronomy festival taking place in Otočac, a town nearby Gospić, while **Advent u Otočcu** and **Prosinac u Gospiću** are two local Christmas events. There was almost no data about the above-mentioned events, signifying that Jesen u Lici was the most popular regional event in the geographical area of Croatia in the last 12 months.

Figure 11 - Jesen u Lici- popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months

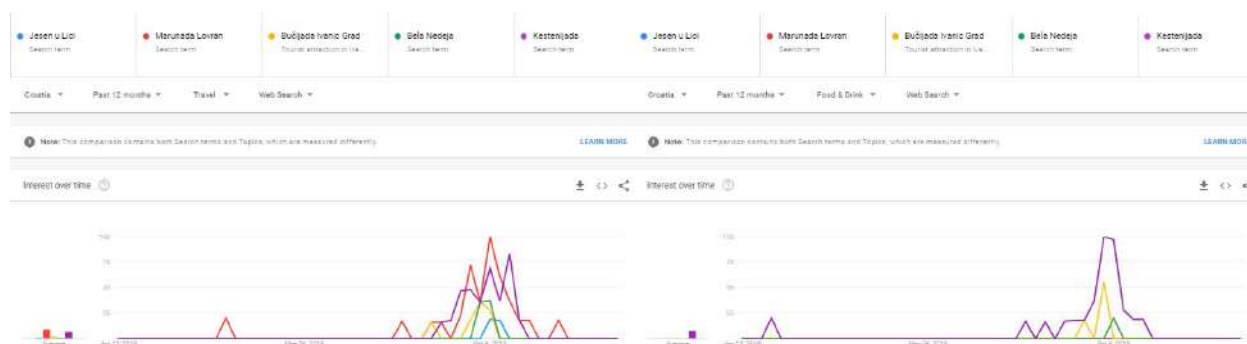


Jesen u Lici + Marunada Lovran + Bučijada Ivanić Grad + Bela Nedeja + Kestenijada

Jesen u Lici was compared with other gastronomical festivals happening at the beginning of October. **Marunada** in Lovran and **Kestenijada** in Hrvatska Kostajnica are events dedicated to chestnuts, Bučijada in Ivanić Grad is dedicated to pumpkins, while **Bela Nedeja** in Kastav is a festival of young wine. All of these events take place in small towns around the same time as Jesen u Lici and promote the cultural heritage of their local areas. The graph reported in figure 12 shows that Jesen u Lici was the least popular in the category Travel and showed no results in the category Food and Drink in Croatia in the last 12 months. This implies that better promotion of Jesen u Lici is needed, perhaps with a focus

on attracting visitors from nearby counties, as well as those who are already visiting the area during the event, e.g. at the Plitvice Lakes.

Figure 12 - Jesen u Lici compared with similar competitor events –popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months in categories Travel and Food and Drinks

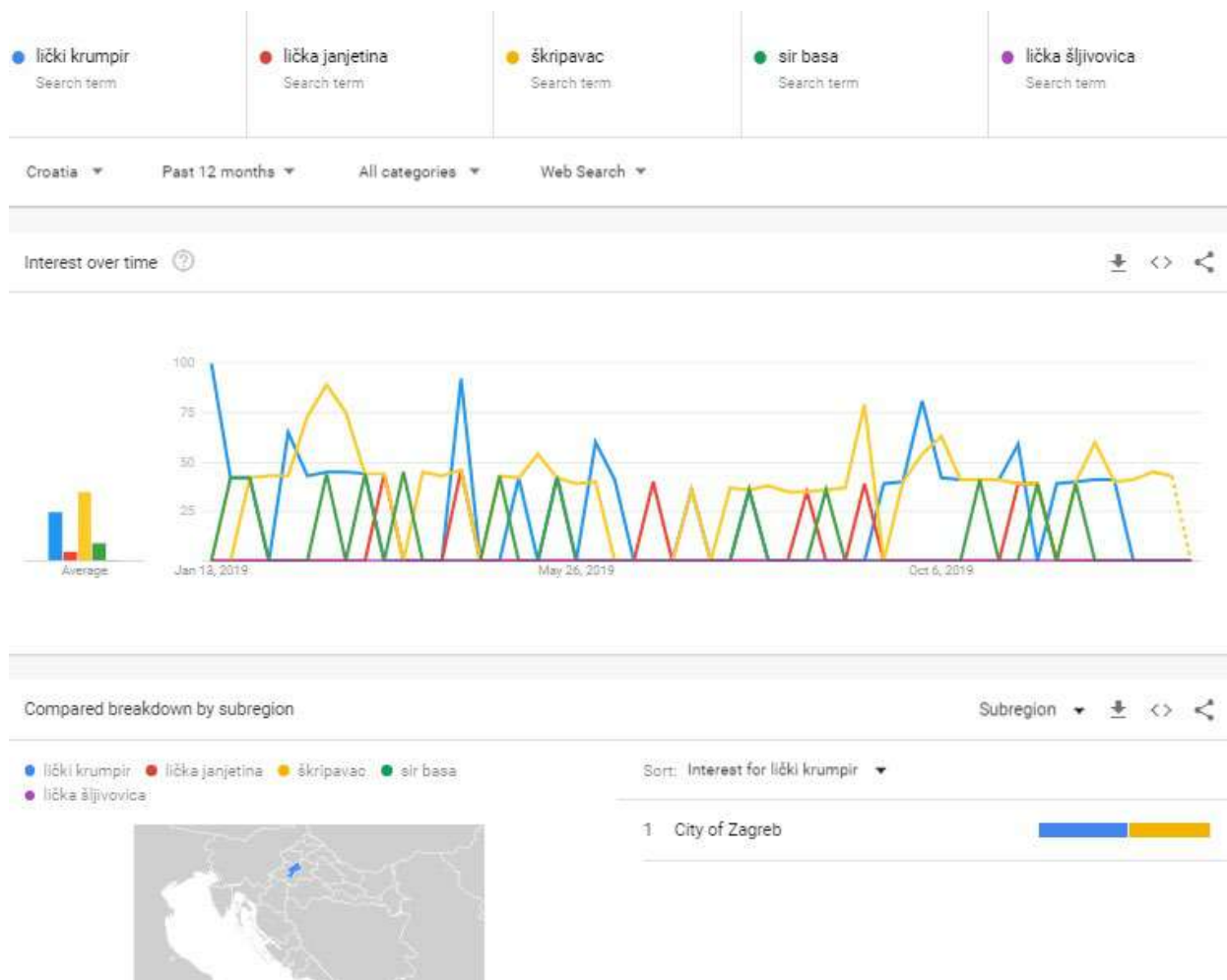


lički krumpir + lička janjetina + škripavac + sir basa + lička šljivovica

The popularity of the most famous food products from Lika region was analysed in the geographical area of Croatia over the past 12 months in the subcategory **Food and Drinks**. These are **lički krumpir** (Lika potato), **lička janjetina** (Lika lamb), two types of traditional cheese called **škripavac** and **basa**, and a typical plum brandy under the name **lička šljivovica**.

The results reported in figure 13 show very low interest in these gastronomical regional specialities. The only interest is detected in the City of Zagreb, with the most popular search terms being lički krumpir and škripavac, while lička šljivovica showed no results.

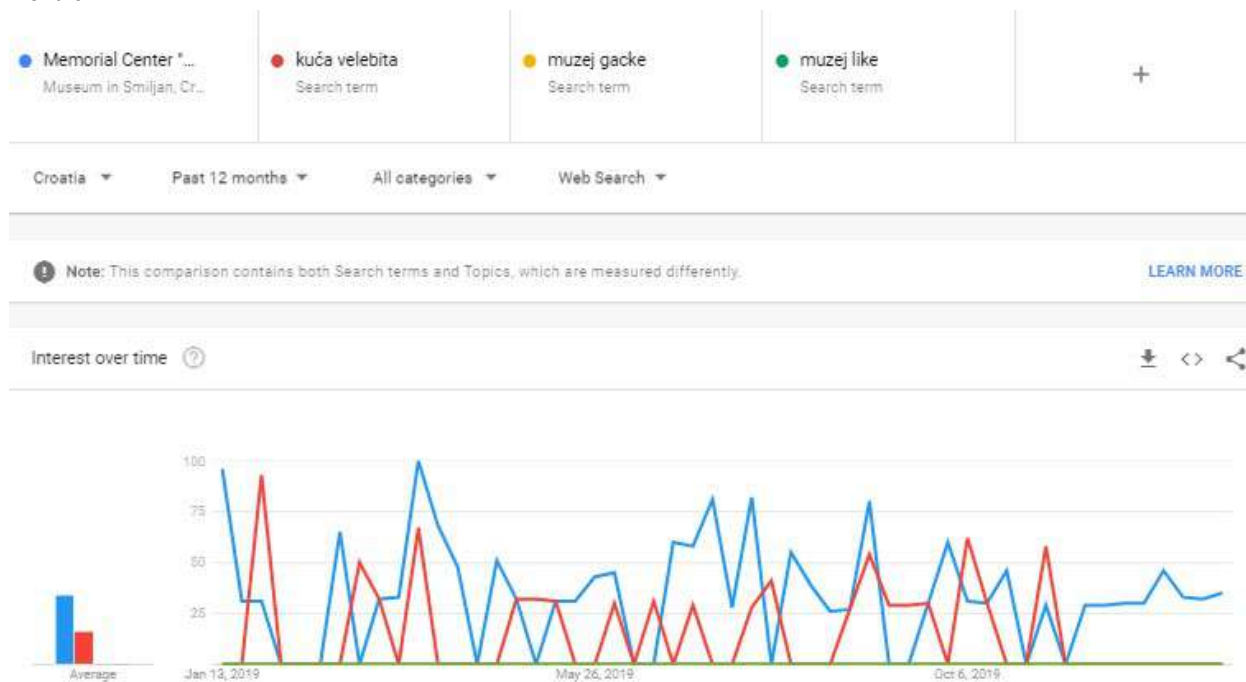
Figure 13 – Comparison of typical gastronomy products from Lika region - popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months



Memorial Center Nikola Tesla + Kuća Velebita + Muzej Gacke + Muzej Like

Memorial Center Nikola Tesla was opened in 2006 in Smiljan (a village nearby Gospić), a birthplace of Nikola Tesla, one of the most famous inventors in the world. **Kuća Velebita** (Velebit House) is a centre for visitors of Northern Velebit National Park, which opened in 2017 in Krasno, a small village in Velebit Mountain. **Muzej Gacke** in Otočac has been open since 1997, although its first museum collections date from the 1960s. **Muzej Like** in Gospić is the museum with the longest tradition in Lika region, being open since 1958.

Figure 14- Comparison of Memorial Center Nikola Tesla, Kuća Velebita, Muzej Gacke, Muzej Like- Croatia over the last 12 months



The graph in fig. 14 shows the frequency of searched keywords, the geographical area is set to Croatia, the time filter is set over the past 12 months and there is no category filter. The most popular is Memorial center Nikola Tesla, followed by Kuća Velebita, while Muzej Gacke and Muzej Like show no results.

In general, all four museums have relatively low popularity, which suggests a need to promote cultural heritage more and include museums in the tourism offer of Lika-Senj County. Whereas the first two are at least popular outside Lika-Senj County, the latter two could look up to them and try to attract more visitors by putting focus on marketing and promotion activities towards school excursions.

Hotel Ana Gospić + Hotel Stara Lika + Eco camp Rizvan City + Linden Tree Retreat and Ranch

Hotel Ana and **Hotel Stara Lika** are two hotels in Gospić that offer standard hotel accommodation, whereas **Eco camp Rizvan City** and **Linden Tree Retreat and Ranch** are two lodging sites which offer not only accommodation but also different activities, such as paintball, zip line, horse riding, animal tracking or yoga retreats. The popularity of these accommodation facilities was compared in the last

12 months, while the geographical location is set to Croatia. First, they were compared in all categories, and then with a filter Hotels and Accommodations.

The results in figure 15 show that all four accommodations do not have a high popularity rate, with **Eco camp Rizvan City** being the most popular, with a peak at the end of March and the beginning of April and then again in the second half of May. This suggests that spring is the season when most visitors consider planning their trip to Lika. When a filter Hotels and Accommodations is applied, only **Linden Tree Retreat and Ranch** shows some results, while others show no results, as illustrated in figure 16.

Figure 15 - Comparison of accommodation facilities in Gospić area – popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months in all categories

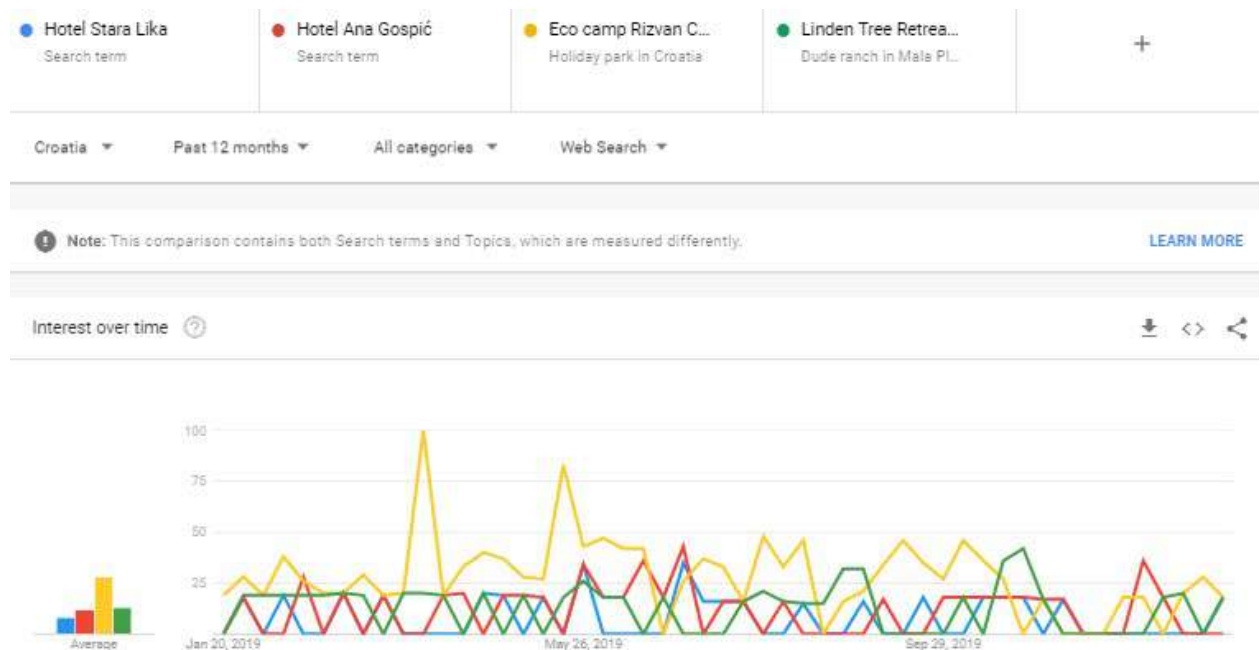
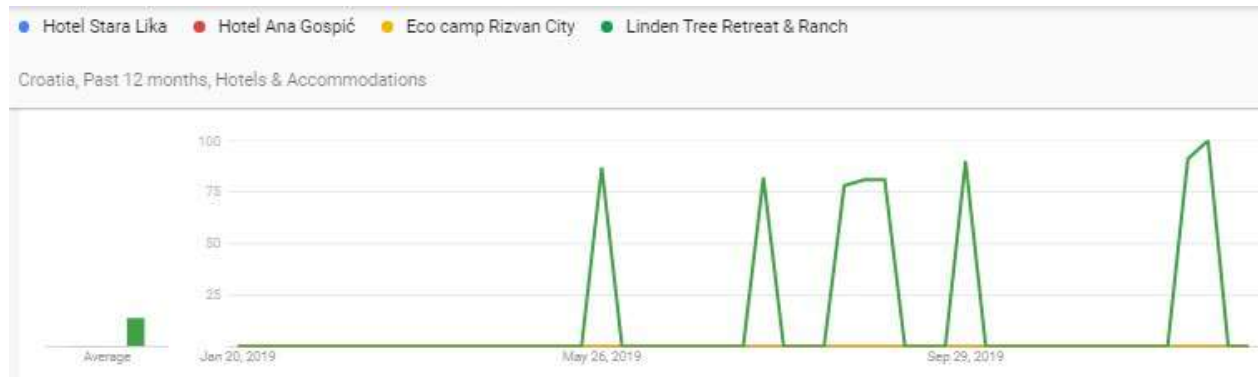


Figure 16 - Comparison of accommodation facilities in Gospić area – popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months in Hotels and Accommodations

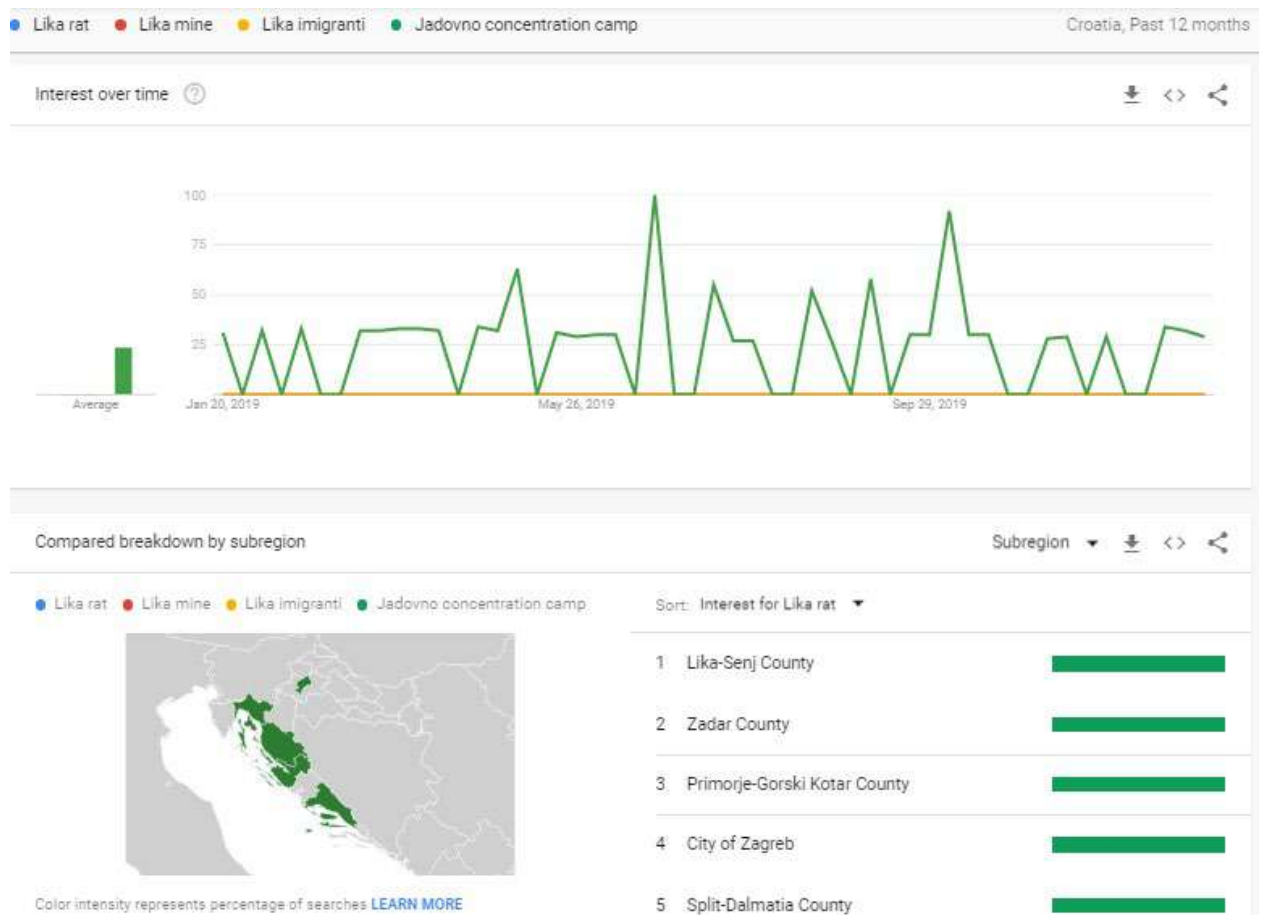


Lika rat + Lika mine + Lika imigranti + Jadovno concentration camp

One of the aims of this research was to investigate why there are not that many tourists at the concerned location. In order to do it, the following search was made to check whether Lika is associated with some keywords that might have negative connotations. The keywords used were: **Lika rat** (Lika war) and **Lika mine** (Lika landmines) to determine if the general public considers Lika as a potentially dangerous region to visit due to the Croatian War of Independence. The area of Lika is now one of the main migration corridors for illegal immigrants, and because of it, **Lika imigranti** (Lika immigrants) was used as a keyword. The fourth keyword is **Jadovno concentration camp**, located 20 km from Gospić, which was a concentration and extermination camp during World War II.

The graph in figure 17 shows that with the geographical area set to Croatia over the last 12 months in all categories, there were no results for the first three keywords, which means that the searched terms were searched by an insufficient number of users. And while landmines and immigrants are perceived by the local population as threats to safety, it can be concluded that the general public does not associate these keywords with the concerned location. The only searched term that showed results was **Jadovno concentration camp**, which suggests the interest of the general public for the topics of WWII, which could be used for development of historical/heritage tourism, especially since the selected keyword was searched not only in Croatia but also in the neighbouring countries, as well as Austria, Germany, Canada and the USA.

Figure 17 - Comparison of keywords that might have negative connotations and are connected with Lika- popularity in Croatia over the last 12 months



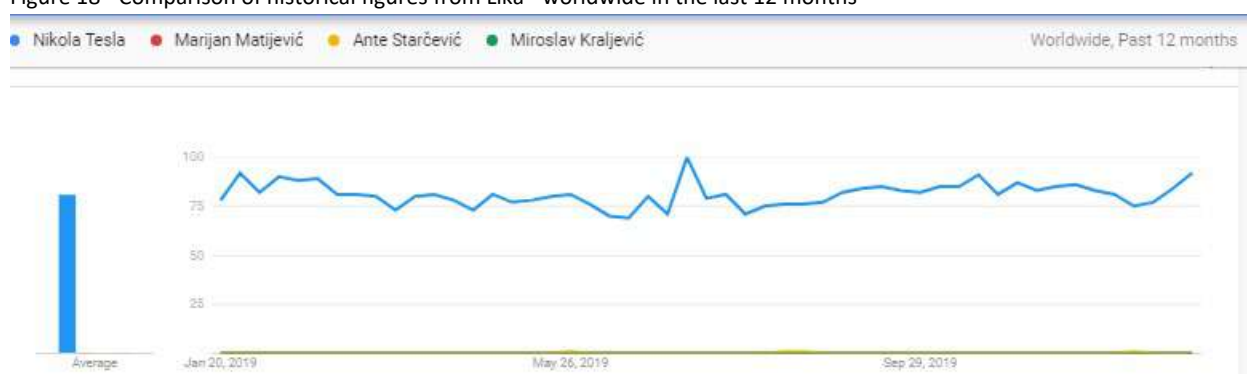
Nikola Tesla + Ante Starčević + Marijan Matijević + Miroslav Kraljević

The popularity of the most famous historical figures from Lika was compared to determine their worldwide popularity, as this could be a good basis for developing historical/heritage tourism. The geographical area is set at worldwide, the time filter is set over the past 12 months and there is no category filter.

The results in figure 18 show that the most popular historical figure is **Nikola Tesla**, a famous inventor, whose name has been searched as a keyword in 80 different countries on all continents. Next in popularity is **Ante Starčević**, a politician who was often referred to as "Father of the Homeland" and

this keyword was searched in 9 different countries. **Marijan Matijević**, a professional wrestler known as the strongest man in the world, is still relatively unknown worldwide, being searched as a keyword in 6 countries, as well as a famous Croatian painter **Miroslav Kraljević**, being searched in only two countries - Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These results can be used to further enhance the position of Memorial Centre Nikola Tesla on the tourist map of Lika, but also put more focus on building a story around other historical figures from the region.

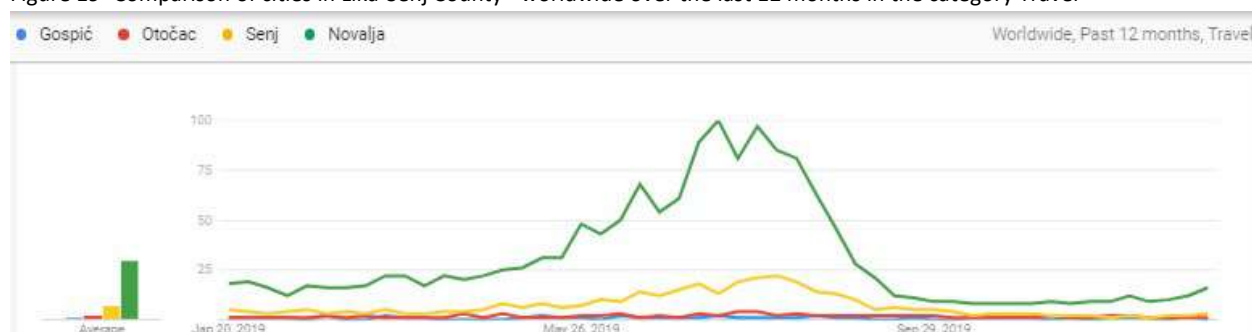
Figure 18 - Comparison of historical figures from Lika - worldwide in the last 12 months



Gospić + Otočac + Senj + Novalja

Gospić is the administrative centre of Lika-Senj County where there are only four cities: **Gospić**, **Otočac**, **Novalja** and **Senj**. While the first two are located inland, the latter two are located on the Adriatic coast. These four cities were compared with the aim to determine the popularity of Gospić when compared with the neighbouring cities. Their popularity was compared worldwide, time filter set for the past 12 months and the filter used was Travel.

Figure 19- Comparison of cities in Lika-Senj County - worldwide over the last 12 months in the category Travel

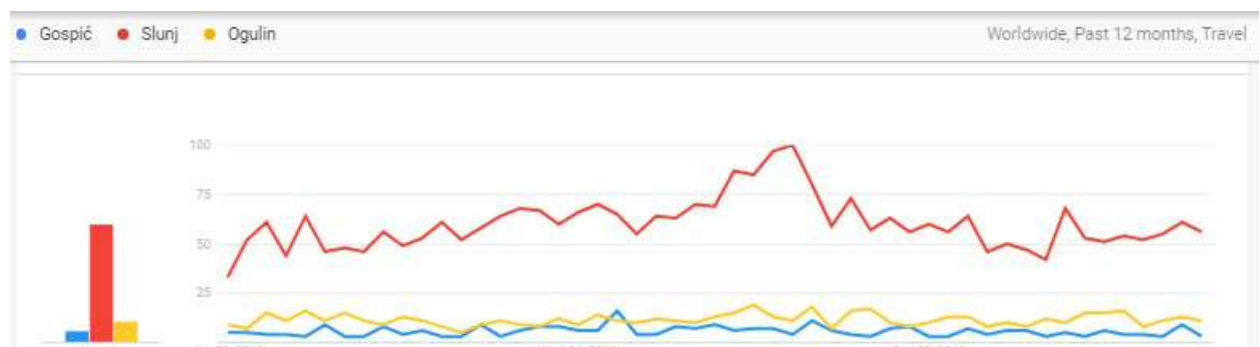


The graph in figure 19 shows the popularity of searched terms, with Gospić being the least popular and Novalja the most popular searched term. It also shows that the two cities on the coast were more popular than those inland.

Gospić + Ogulin + Slunj

Gospić was compared with the neighbouring and competitor locations of **Ogulin** and **Slunj**, two other small towns which attract a certain amount of tourists. All three towns are located in the mountainous part of Central Croatia, have continental climate and seasonal arrivals of tourists. **Ogulin** is known as a town of fairy tales and its nearby Klek Mountain is famous for many tales about witches. It is the birthplace of famous Croatian fairy tales writer - Ivana Brlić Mažuranić, in whose honour the Festival of Fairy Tales has been organised every year. **Slunj** is famous for a part of the town called Rastoke, where there are small waterfalls and corn mills dating from the 18th century. It is also popular because of its vicinity of Plitvice Lakes and it recently started attracting lots of young visitors because of Momento Demento, a psytrance music festival located halfway on the road between Ogulin and Slunj. The popularity rate was compared worldwide, time filter was set for the past 12 months and the filter used was Travel. The results of the data analysis in figure 20 present Slunj as the most popular keyword, with the highest popularity at the beginning of August, during Momento Demento festival and high season. Both Ogulin and Gospić show low popularity when compared with Slunj.

Figure 20- Comparison of Gospić, Ogulin and Slunj - worldwide in the last 12 months/Travel



Comment on non-searched queries

Search Term	Categories	Country/Worldwide
The River Lika	All	Worldwide
Muzej Gacke	All	Croatia/ Worldwide
Muzej Like	All	Croatia/ Worldwide
Hotel Stara Lika	Hotel and Accommodations	Croatia/ Worldwide
Hotel Ana Gospić	Hotel and Accommodations	Croatia/ Worldwide
Eco camp Rizvan City	Hotel and Accommodations	Croatia/ Worldwide
Eko-etno Gacka	All	Croatia
Lička šljivovica	Food and Drinks	Croatia
Lika rat	All	Croatia
Lika mine	All	Croatia
Lika imigranti	All	Croatia

Google trends analysis showed a lack of interest for the search terms connected with certain natural and cultural attractions, accommodation and local gastronomy, which implies that more effort should be put into increasing their popularity and integrating them in tourism offer of Lika region. On the other hand, no results for search terms that might have negative connotations associated with Lika suggest that they most probably do not have a big negative influence on the image of the region in the eyes of the general public.

To conclude, Google trends analysis clearly shows that Gospić is still not perceived as a tourist destination, neither is the county as a whole nor the region Lika itself. However, there are certain attractions around Gospić that are known worldwide, such as national parks Paklenica and the Plitvice Lakes or Velebit Mountain. The analysis showed that the general public mostly associates this location with beautiful nature and active tourism. Consequently, the results for the most popular accommodation show that the visitors not only look for a place to sleep but prefer to find one that offers various activities, such as horse riding or kayaking. Since today's tourists are mostly looking for real, authentic experience, Lika as a region has a lot to offer. Its most significant tourist event Jesen u Lici just needs a boost in promotion, because it offers exactly what tourists look for: authentic food and drinks, traditional and modern handicrafts and an insight into rich tradition and history of Lika. In general, a better promotion of local gastronomy and small farmers is needed, especially because the value of some of the products is also recognized by the experts. For example, Lika potato is registered and protected in the EU market, where it was awarded the label of geographic origin. The most famous historical figure from Lika, Nikola Tesla, is another resource for tourism development, being well-known all around the world. There is already a memorial centre in his birthplace which attracts a certain number of tourists, but the results of this analysis show that not so many people associate Nikola Tesla with Lika or Gospić. Future marketing and communication strategies need to create a story or an experience around the keywords used in this analysis in order to attract more tourists and create an interesting destination image. Lika-Senj County and Gospić as its administrative centre and the most populated city have all the desired qualities for development of sustainable tourism – clean nature, fresh air, rich history and many undiscovered places to visit.

In a nutshell, Lika area is a real tourism gem for all the travellers who love going off the beaten path and it certainly belongs to the category of overlooked destinations not enough tourists visit. In order to strengthen the position of Gospić on the tourist maps and increase its popularity, one of the strategies could be to strengthen the position of Lika as a destination, with Gospić as its focal point.

3. 'NON-TOURIST' SURVEY ANALYSIS

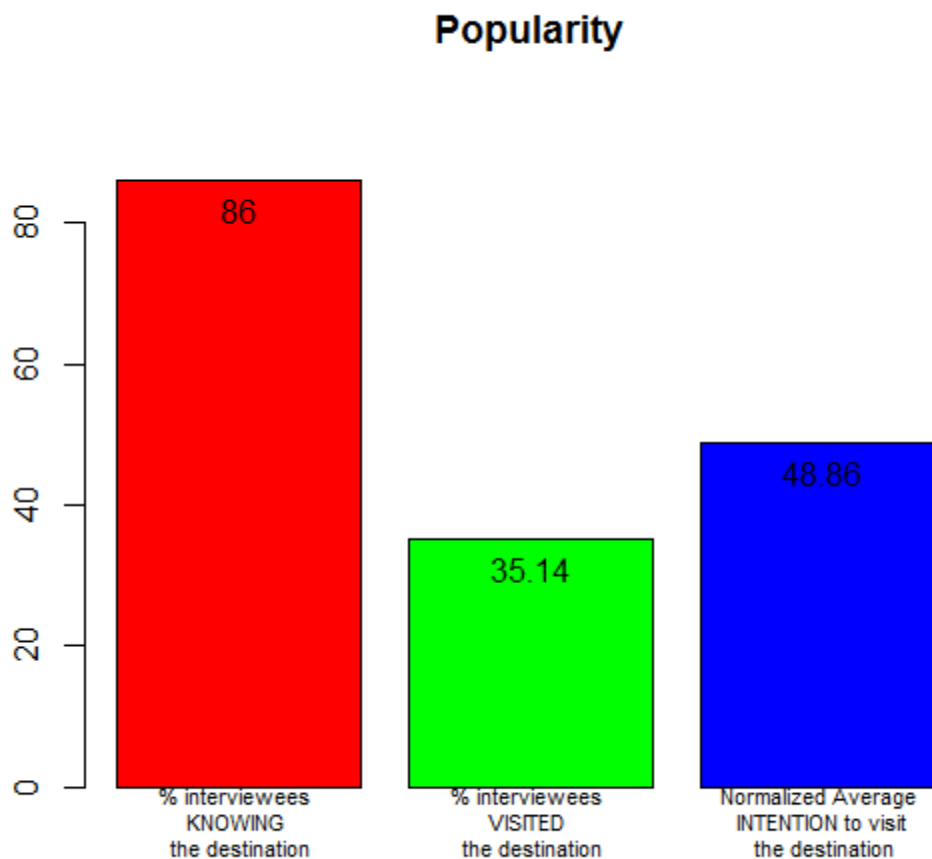
To the aim of developing the little town of Gospić into a tourism destination, the opinions of tourists who arrived in Zagreb and Rijeka but did not and will not visit Gospić is of particular interest, because they are able and willing to travel the distance from their origin city to Zagreb and Rijeka, they might find the region attractive overall, but first and foremost they could include Gospić in their travel itineraries in the region. In this Reputation Analysis such tourists (visiting more popular destinations not far from Gospić) are called 'non-visitors' to highlight that they may 'easily' visit Gospić, but they do not.

The Reputation of Gospić in the view of 'non tourists' was investigated through a semi-structured survey on the opinions of 37 people visiting Zagreb and Rijeka. The face to face survey interviews were carried out from 20th till 24th December 2019, during which the interviews were performed at sites where the questionnaires were submitted.

3.1 Popularity with "non-visitor"

In order to check how popular Gospić is with non-visitors, the survey was conducted, which showed that 86 % of the respondents have heard about Gospić and 35% visited it in the past. When asked whether they were likely to visit Gospić in the next three years, 48% of respondents showed an intention to do so, as shown in figure 21.

Figure 21 – The popularity of Gospić with non-visitors



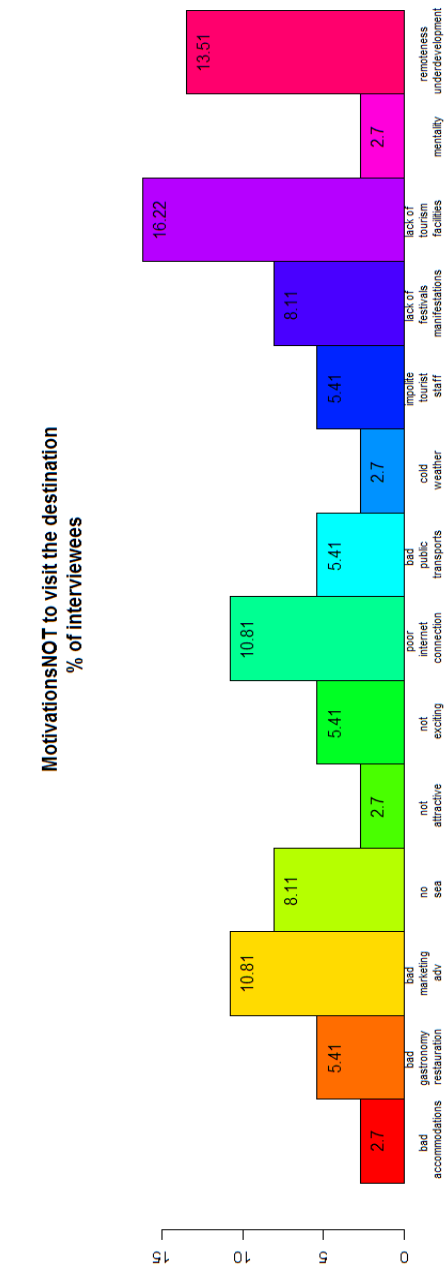
When asked to name the main reasons for not visiting the concerned location, as shown in figure 22, most of the non-visitors mentioned lack of tourism facilities, which can include many different elements, from not enough accommodation facilities to lack of preferable restaurants. This result indicates that the existing tourism infrastructure in Gospić area is not attractive or efficient enough to attract a bigger number of tourists with what it currently offers.

This is followed by underdevelopment and remoteness, poor branding and promotion of Lika and poor Internet connection. Bearing in mind that Lika-Senj County is the largest county in Croatia, some parts

of the County are almost never visited by tourists because they are not popular and the tourists do not know they even exist. Even though the County itself is situated between the north and the south of Croatia and has a very good geographical position for tourism development, due to the lack of promotion, it is possible that many of those who travel around Croatia perceive it as a place where there is nothing, in particular, to see or do. In other words, Lika is stereotypically perceived as a vast empty territory one crosses on the way from the capital to Dalmatia or vice versa. Since the County is very sparsely populated and quite rural, the tourists often perceive it as underdeveloped, which is another reason why they are not motivated to visit it. Poor promotion was stated as one of the reasons why the non-visitors did not feel attracted to visiting Gospić area, as the tourist information they have about it were not sufficient or attractive enough for them to include Gospić as a part of their itineraries. Travelling across the territory of the county might explain why some of the interviewees mentioned poor Internet connection since there are some parts of the County that have very poor mobile phone signal and problems with the Internet connection might occur. For the prosecution of the EXCOVER project, it is important to develop strategies on how to promote and brand Gospić and the County better and attract those tourists who did not show desire to stop and spend their time in Lika.

Some of the other reasons for not visiting Gospić area include no sea and cold climate, whereas it is interesting to note that non-visitors perceive Gospić as a place where there is no entertainment, for example, no festivals, making it not exciting enough for them to visit. Moreover, although they have not visited Gospić during the last three years, some of the non-visitors think that the accommodation there is not according to their preferences, or that the tourism staff they will encounter there might be impolite. Perhaps this is connected with many parts of Lika-Senj County looking underdeveloped and poor, which creates a bad destination image for someone who only sees the scenery next to the main roads. Impolite tourism staff is probably connected with non-visitors generalizing the experience they had with tourism staff in similar locations. Another dimension they mentioned is about the connectivity, where some of them noticed how there is no airport in the County or that public transport does not satisfy their needs to travel around.

Figure 22 –Motivation not to visit the destination

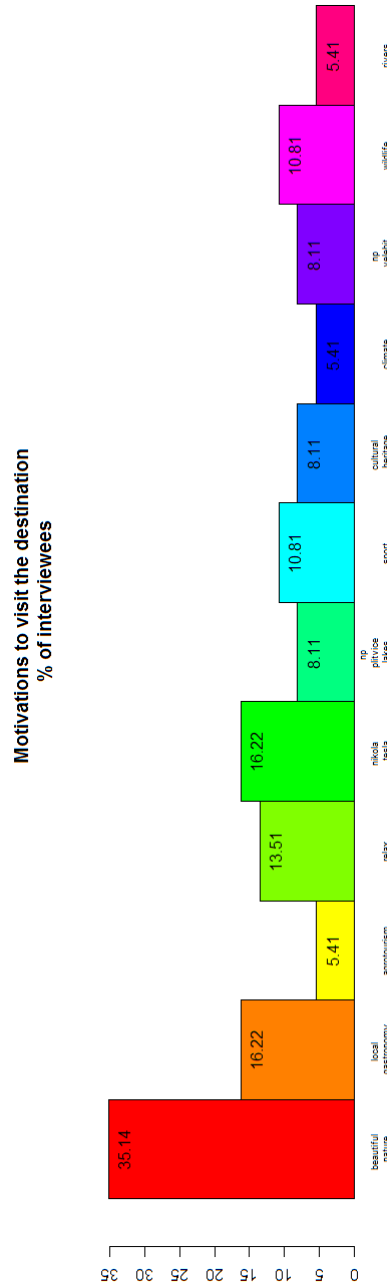


On the other hand, when asked what their reasons for visiting Gospić area would be, as shown in figure 23, most of the respondents (35%) mentioned nature. This is quite important for the prosecution of the EXCOVER project since it indicates that a new tourist product based on nature could have the highest chances for success. Moreover, they have named two national parks as reasons for visiting the area – the Plitvice Lakes and Northern Velebit. Gospić can use this to its advantage since these destinations that tourists would love to visit are in the vicinity of Gospić. Another important factor that was mentioned was wildlife. When planning a new tourist product it should be taken into consideration that the longest mountain in Croatia – Velebit, is situated in Lika-Senj County and it is famous not only because of its amazing landscapes but also for its biodiversity. In fact, Velebit Nature Park is the largest and most complex protected area in Croatia, where many endangered and endemic species have found their habitats, not to forget that it includes two national parks: Northern Velebit and Paklenica. Moreover, rivers, especially the Lika and the Gacka are another important natural resource for tourism development and can meet both needs – for relaxation, as well as for excitement and active holidays, e.g. going rafting or canoeing.

Since some of the respondents showed interest in the cultural heritage of Lika, one figure that cannot be left unmentioned when speaking about famous people from Lika is Nikola Tesla. The worldwide famous inventor was born close to Gospić, in a village called Smiljan, where there is nowadays a memorial centre dedicated to his life and work. This genius inventor created many groundbreaking inventions, and probably the most famous one is the alternating-current (AC) electric system, without which it would be very difficult to imagine the world as we know it today.

Lastly, the respondents mentioned local gastronomy as another motive for visiting Gospić. This does not necessarily mean that they know much about local cuisine but is most probably connected with the importance of food for them when travelling, especially tasting something they have never tasted before. Many contemporary travellers have food on their mind when choosing their next destination and are willing to spend time and money on authentic food and beverage experiences. In fact, food tourism is becoming more popular and it includes the full range of experiences, such as discovering locals-only restaurants or attending cooking classes that can teach one how to prepare a local dish. This finding should also be taken into account when creating the new tourist product and one direction it could take is that of food tourism.

Figure 23 –Motivation to visit the destination



3.2. Market Segmentation

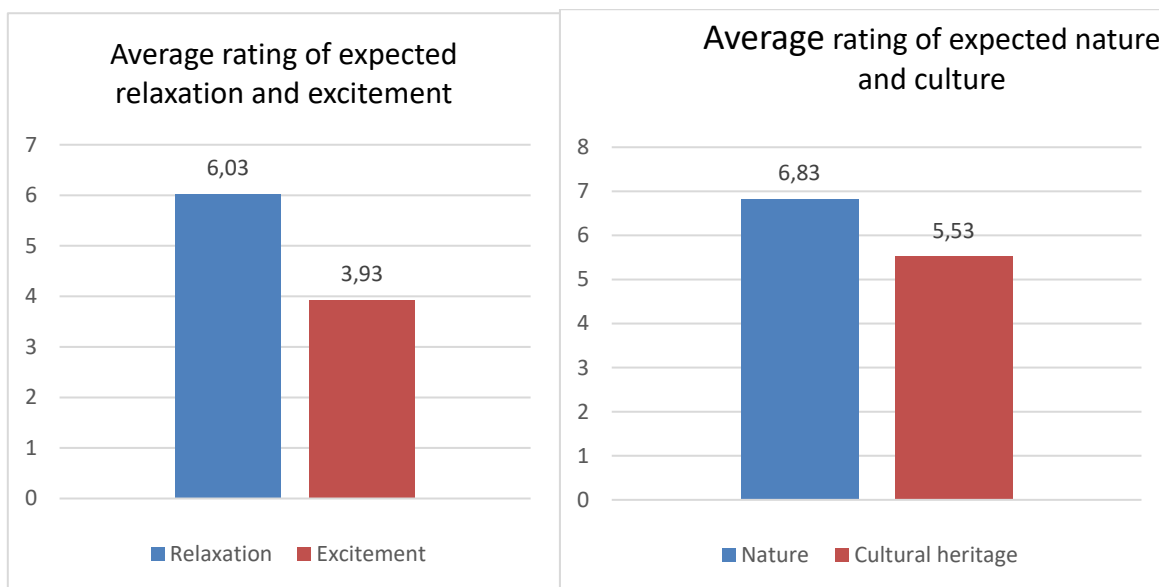
3.2.1 Market Segmentation by socio-demographic characteristics

When asked to rate their intention to visit Gospić in the next three years, with maximum being 7, the average rate was 4. There was no significant difference in this intention with male vs. female, or education level, while interviewees older than 45 are less likely to visit Gospić than those who are younger. Also, those who earn more than 10 000 euro gross a year are more likely to visit Gospić than those who earn less than that, which could be related to their purchasing power. According to this sample, those staying 7 days or less in Croatia are more willing to visit Gospić than those who were staying longer than 7 days. When it comes to their country of origin, domestic non-visitors who live in different parts of Croatia are more willing to visit Gospić than foreign visitors.

Relaxation is what the respondents connect with Gospić, since the majority of them expects Gospić to be a peaceful location where they could relax, probably in nature. When it comes to excitement, they have not to great extent recognized this potential, as shown in figure 24, which indicates that better promotion of active tourism and other tourism niches is necessary.

Speaking about their intention to visit Gospić, nature is a much stronger motivation than cultural heritage, as shown in figure 24. This is probably due to a stronger promotion of certain natural attractions in the County, such as the Plitvice Lakes. With a rate of 6.83 out of maximum 7, their perception of nature around Gospić as being amazing is another indicator that tourism niches based on discovering natural landscapes are a right direction for the development of tourism in Gospić.

Figure 24 – Average rating of expected relaxation and excitement, nature and cultural heritage



Regarding infrastructure, the majority of the respondents did not think that the quality of tourism infrastructures in Gospić was outstanding. In fact, with a rate of 3.33, it can be concluded that their opinion on tourism infrastructure in Gospić is not positive. Whether this is based on the actual information they have about it, should be further investigated. However, it is interesting to note that there were no significant differences in their opinions, regarding their gender, age, country of origin or other factors.

Concerning those respondents who are not likely to visit Gospić in the next three years, 81% of them are not from Croatia, which indicates that, with current promotion and marketing strategies, domestic visitors are more likely to visit Gospić than foreigners.

3.2.2 Market Segmentation by trip-related factors

The privileged type of accommodation structures of the interviewees were home rentals and bed and breakfasts, which they have most probably found on some of the popular sharing economy platforms for booking accommodation. This type of accommodation structure is growing in Gospić and Lika-Senj County, as can be seen on platforms such as Booking and Airbnb. However, the existing number of local renters offering private accommodation is insufficient for bigger tourism expansion of the area, although it satisfies current needs. This indicates that while planning tourism development in Lika, the locals should be motivated to become an active part of that development, encouraging them to take part in offering something they own or their skills and knowledge to tourists via sharing economy platforms.

Interestingly, those respondents who stayed at friends and relatives mostly come from Croatia. Since domestic visitors are most likely willing to visit Gospić in the next three years, it should be further investigated whether and how much they are willing to pay for accommodation or if they prefer to visit only those destinations where they can stay with their friends and family. The purchasing power of domestic visitors is often much lower than those of foreign visitors due to their income and standard of living that is still below the EU average. Taking this into account, when planning the development of accommodation infrastructures, affordable accommodation is probably something that would attract domestic tourists more.

The majority of respondents named culture as one of their main reasons for visiting the locations where the survey was conducted. Since it was conducted a week before Christmas, it is probable that the growing popularity of Advent events was one of the reasons the respondents named culture as their motivation for travelling.

Concerning prices in Gospić, the respondents believed they were moderate. And while low prices attract tourists, especially those who cannot afford expensive holidays, price is not the only factor that visitors consider when planning their holidays. The quality of services is another important factor and so is the hospitality of the locals, as well as the level of safety and security.

The respondents expect the tourists and people with different cultures to feel welcome in Gospić, which is probably a reflection of the positive experience with the locals they had in other parts of Croatia they were visiting. They also believe that the level of safety and security in Gospić is very high,

which is a good sign because this can be one of the crucial factors when planning holidays. The ability of a tourism destination to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors is a path to its success.

On average, the interviewees' stays were 7 days long. Concerning those who decided to stay longer, it can be noted that these were mostly women, 25-44 years old, employed, who come from abroad and whose preferred lodging was bread and breakfast. The majority of them named nature as a main motivation for possible visits to Gospić, namely the Plitvice Lakes and Northern Velebit, landscapes and wildlife, and other mentioned elements included: Nikola Tesla, local gastronomy, visiting family farms, relaxation and spending active holidays, e.g. going hiking or kayaking.

3.2.3 Implications for marketing and strategy

Regarding marketing and strategy, the majority of the respondents believe that the marketing and communication initiatives concerning Gospić are very ineffective. This could explain why they decided not to visit Gospić when travelling to other destinations in Croatia and it is a red alarm for the development of tourism in the area.

Another important factor for tourism promotion that is connected with personal experience and emotional appeal of the destination is the word of mouth. Although in today's digital era it might seem that the word of mouth lost its significance for tourism development due to digital marketing, it should not be overlooked since this informal way of passing information orally from person to person has its digital dimension nowadays, with the growing popularity of Google reviews and ratings. With a rate being 4 out of 7, it can be concluded that the word of mouth about Gospić is neither too good nor too bad. However, there were some significant differences in responses concerning this topic. It is worth noting that 80% of the interviewees who do not think that the word of mouth about Gospić is very good named visiting friends as their travel motivation. This might indicate that the information they got about Gospić or Lika-Senj County came through the interaction with their friends and family, and that face-to-face word of mouth is not that positive about Gospić as a tourist destination one might want to visit.

In order to change the existing stereotypes about Gospić as uninteresting destination that does not have much to offer, digital marketing can be used. With its growing popularity in creating desirable destination image, digital marketing is gaining more importance for recommendation and attracting

tourists to a certain destination than the old method of word of mouth. However, digitally branding and advertising Gospić and Lika could be a waste of money if the existing tourism facilities and services do not improve. One of the ways of doing it might be with greater involvement of the locals in sharing economy, in which case they would provide something of their own to tourists. However, to make Gospić an ideal destination, networking of all tourism stakeholders is necessary, which means working together towards a common goal – the development of sustainable tourism in Gospić and its surroundings.

4. VISITORS SURVEY ANALYSIS

While Google Trends provide information about the reputation of Gospić with the general public of internet users and the 'non tourist' survey portrays the reputation of Gospić in the imagination and expectations of people who do not know Gospić directly, only tourists can form a reputation based on the actual experience of the destination. Interviewing tourists in Gospić is also crucial to understand how the reputation of Gospić as tourism destination configures, which aspects of the local supply affect the overall reputation positively and which ones have a negative impact.

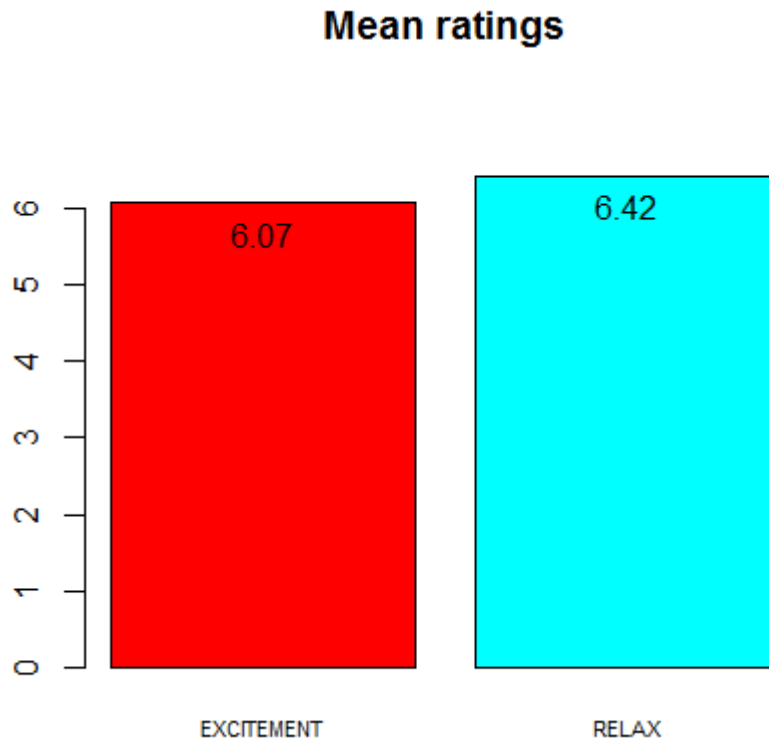
The reputation measurement model employed for this survey is a version of the Reputation Quotient adapted to tourism destinations, developed to the aims of EXCOVER. The model considers the reputation of a destination with tourists as composed by 5 main dimensions: emotional appeal; destination image and management; heritage, climate, products and services (quality); workers attitude, social responsibility. These are theoretical constructs, measured through indicators (survey questions) able to catch their constitutive factors from the eyes of a tourist. For example, tourists do not experience the local welfare directly, but can get an idea of its level from the impressions he got from hospitals, schools, public services etc. Beside indicators, the questionnaire contains questions about the socio-demographic and trip-related characteristics of the tourists, their overall satisfaction and extent to which his expectations about the destination were fulfilled.

The structured survey questionnaires were submitted to 114 tourists visiting Gospić area, through face-to-face interviews carried out from 17th until 20th December. The results offer helpful insights and provide important suggestions about destination management strategies and tourism development actions.

4.1 The Emotional Appeal of Gospić

The emotional appeal of Gospić, based on how the visitors feel in the destination, is presented in the bar chart reported in figure 25. It is visible that the relax dimension is the most praised one, followed by the excitement dimension.

Figure 25 Gospić– the emotional appeal



Since the quietness and tranquillity of Gospić and Lika region are one of the key strengths for attracting the tourists, consequently relaxation is what they can experience once they spend holidays in Lika region. Being the least populated county in Croatia, Lika-Senj County can use this to its advantage for tourism development because there are current tourism trends of having a city break and going to a place far away from traffic and crowdedness of big cities. Once they arrive to Lika, they can enjoy peace

and silence of small towns and villages, since even Gospić, as the biggest city and the centre of the County, has less than 10 000 inhabitants living in the city itself.

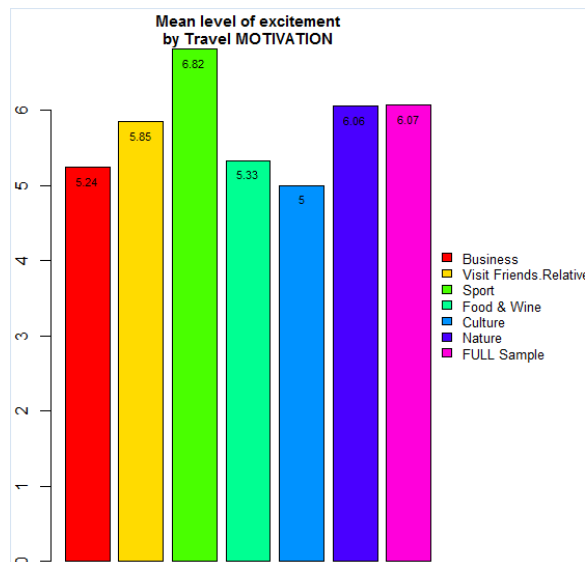
Another important element that contributes to the emotional appeal of Gospić are its residents. On sharing accommodation platforms, such as Airbnb, the residents hosting the tourists have usually been rated as hospitable and welcoming, which might add value to the dimension of relaxation. If a welcoming and hospitable host is who a visitor meets when spending holidays in Lika, there is a probability that it will make the visitor feel relaxed. On one hand, the interaction between the hosts and the visitors can provide an authentic experience tourists are looking for since the hosts can share insider tips and recommendations on what to do and see in Lika and this way enrich their itineraries. Furthermore, the pleasant interaction between the hosts and tourists leads to the latter feeling welcome and even safe, which also has its influence on the level of relaxation they feel.

With its rural landscapes and amazing nature, Lika is a perfect place for spending active holidays, which is probably the reason why excitement scored so high. With many bike and hiking trails, or activities such as kayaking and canoeing crystal clear rivers, excitement is something that active tourists can experience in Gospić area while enjoying their time in breath-taking nature. From the Plitvice Lakes and Velebit Mountain to the Gacka and the Lika Rivers, Lika region provides peaceful atmosphere and enables deep relaxation for nature lovers, while at the same time offering excitement to those who seek more active holidays.

Since there were no considerable differences in answers between male and female, age classes, people with different occupations, education level, family income, accommodation type, or the length of stay, it can be concluded that relaxation and excitement are indeed the most important dimensions of how the majority of tourists feel. However, when it comes to tourists' motivation, certain differences can be noted that are related to the excitement dimension and that should be taken into consideration for the prosecution of the EXCOVER project.

As can be seen from figure 26, those visitors who travel for sport motivations, represent the category with the highest score referred to excitement, followed by those who come because of nature. On the other hand, those coming for culture represent the lowest score.

Figure 26 - Level of excitement by travel motivation



With its many hiking and cycling trails, and the growing businesses of renting kayaks, canoes, quads or offering horse riding, to only name a few, it can be concluded that those tourists who come to Gospić area for sport and nature, find the destination emotionally appealing due to the excitement they feel while doing various sport and recreational activities there. These findings are important for the prosecution of the EXCOVER, because they indicate that by developing active tourism services, while emphasizing spending time in nature, the emotional appeal of the destination can be even higher. Consequently, that could attract more visitors to come to Gospić area, instead of spending their holidays at similar locations nearby. Lika is a mountainous region with a continental climate, which means that it has a potential of developing tourism all year long, offering various outdoor activities according to the season.

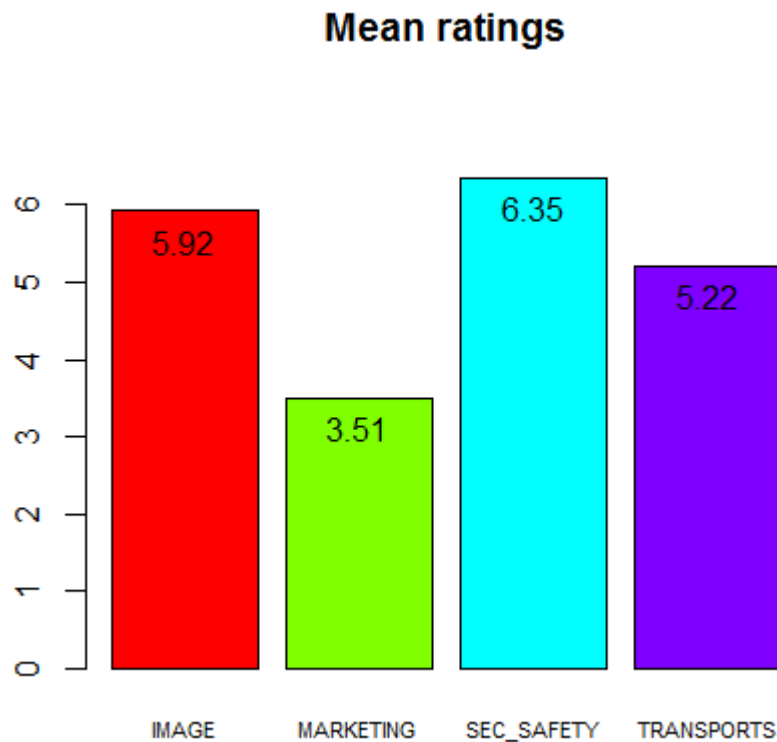
On the other hand, those tourist visiting the destinations for culture, are the least satisfied category when it comes to excitement, which should be taken into consideration in the development of the project. Whereas there are obvious improvements in the active tourism offer in the region aimed towards those tourists who travel for sport or nature, less has been done to attract those travelling for culture. One of the steps towards improving this is to better promote the existing cultural attractions, including museums, as well as the existing events, such as Jesen u Lici, while developing and offering

new services, e.g. storytelling tours, outdoor escape games or LARPs, which could raise the level of excitement with the tourists travelling for culture.

4.2. Gospić 's Image and destination Management

The destination image and management, based on how the respondents assessed the attractiveness of the destination image, the effectiveness of the marketing and communication initiatives, their feeling of safety and security and how easy it was for them to reach Gospić and to move around is presented in figure 27.

Figure 27 Perception of image, marketing, safety and transport



Security and safety have the highest rate of 6.32, which indicates that the visitors feel safe while spending their holidays in Gospić area. This is not surprising, since the whole region is not famous for high crime rate, and crimes such as robberies, murders or rapes are not something the tourists expressed their worries about during the interviews. However, since there are still landmines in the area, and since the migrant route is currently crossing the region, more attention should be paid to raising the level of safety and security for those tourists who individually visit the County for outdoor activities, to make sure that their lives are not endangered.

Destination image with a rate of 5.92 indicates that the tourists find Gospić area attractive. This is probably related to the natural landscapes of Lika region as a whole. Being unpolluted and very peaceful, Lika's biggest attraction is natural heritage – from well-known UNSECO World Heritage site of the Plitvice Lakes or Velebit Mountain, to still undiscovered gems, such as the Lika Canyon.

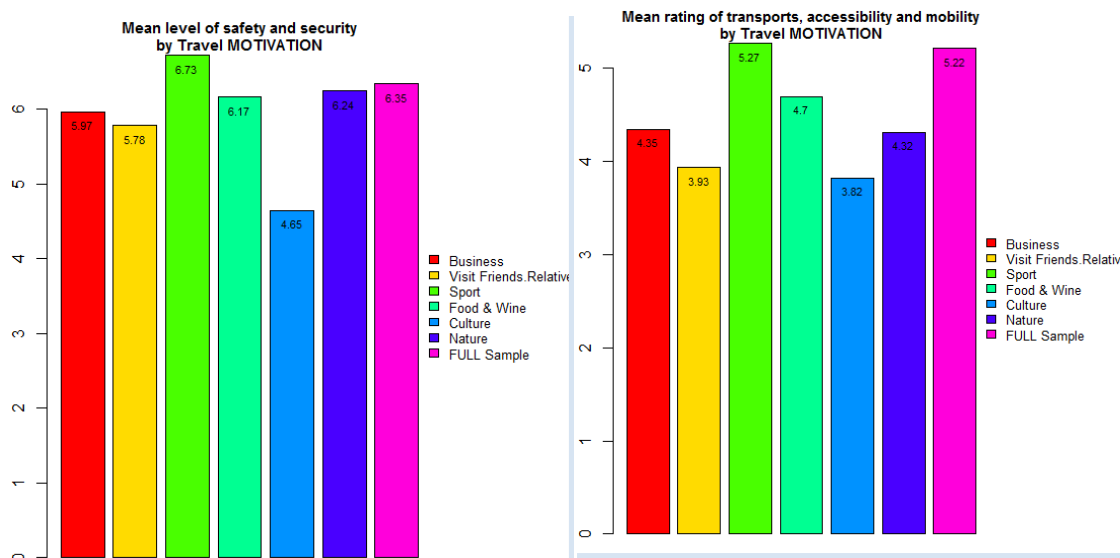
Transport and accessibility have a positive rate of 5.22, probably because Gospić is situated close to the A1 highway, which enables good connectivity with the rest of Croatia. Furthermore, two main state roads connecting the north and the south also cross the region. This means that tourists travelling by their own vehicles or in organised bus tours, usually do not experience big obstacles arriving to or travelling around the region, especially since the roads are well-marked by appropriate signposts. However, those who want to travel by public transport might face many obstacles because the connectivity between villages and towns in Lika-Senj County is very poor or, in some case, even non-existent.

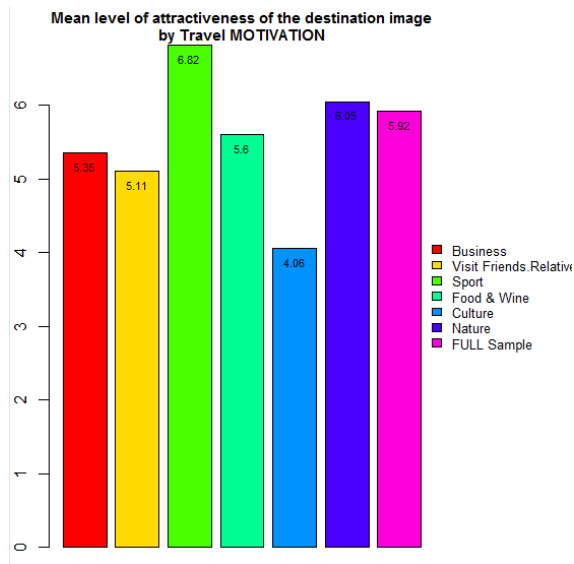
Mean ratings related to marketing activities are the lowest, suggesting that more should be done in order to promote Lika and Gospić as tourist destinations. Although there already are destination marketing strategies for Gospić and the County, these low ratings highlight that the existing strategies should be improved in a way that they are more effective for attracting the tourists. Furthermore, during the interviews, some tourists noted how it was often challenging to find all the necessary information for planning their trip to the County in one place, which could be one of the approaches for improving marketing activities.

There were no considerable differences in answers between male and female, age classes, people with different occupations, education level or family income. However, when it comes to tourists' travel motivation, certain differences can be noted.

As shown in Figure 28, those tourists who travelled for culture or to visit friends and relatives, assessed safety and security, transport and accessibility, as well as the overall attractiveness of the destination image with a much lower mean rating than travellers travelling for other purposes. When it comes to tourists travelling for culture, this might be related to the poor offer of cultural events in the region, accompanied by insufficient promotion of the existing cultural sites. On the other hand, those who travel to visit friends and families possibly have a strong connection to the area, and might have visited it more than once, especially those who used to live in the County in the past. Having visited the area more than once, they are more aware of some elements that tourists who only come once do not pay close attention to, e.g. war consequences such as minefields, non-efficient public transport or the poor condition of some local and county roads that have not been repaired in years. Since there is a big chance they have already been in the area and would come back to visit their friends and family again, the image will perhaps not influence their intention to visit the location again but it might influence their intentions to recommend the destination to other potential visitors they know. In general, if the level of attractiveness of destination image is low, there is little chance that the visitors would feel the urge to revisit the location, let alone recommend it to anyone.

Figure 28 Safety and security, transport and destination image by travel motivation



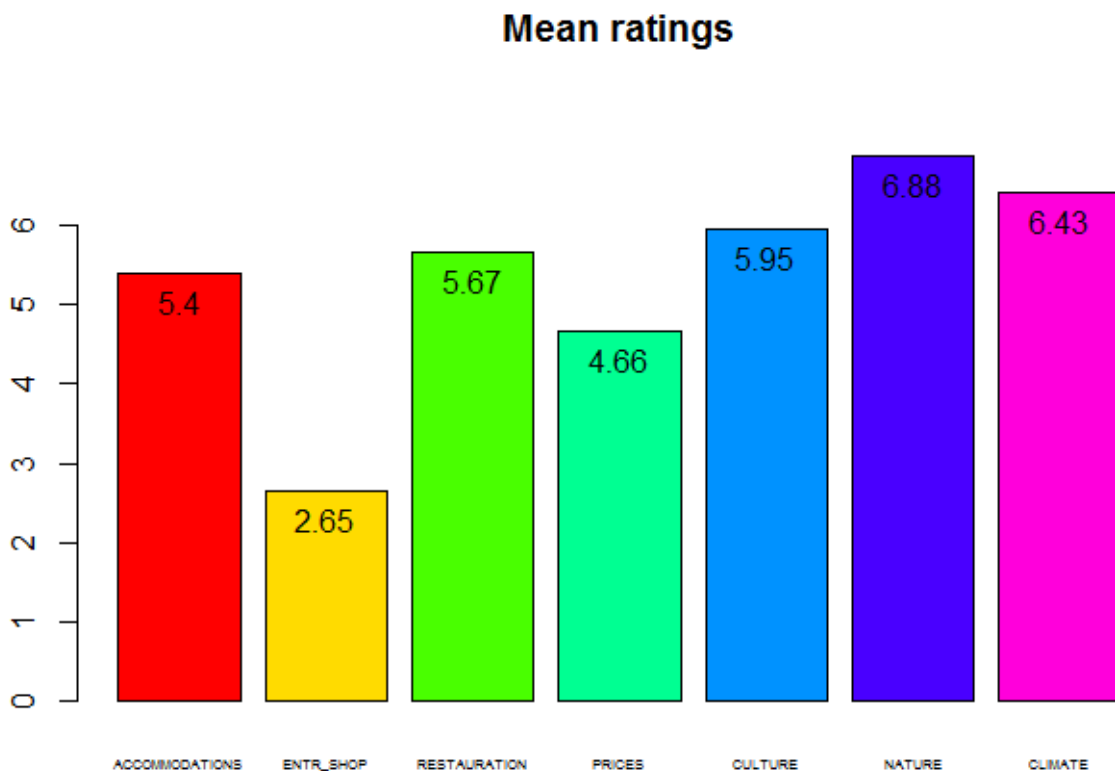


4.3 The quality of products and services, heritage and climate in Gospić

The graph in Figure 29 illustrates how the respondents rated accommodation, local food, prices, shopping and entertainment, cultural heritage, natural heritage and climate.

Nature is the most praised element with a very high rating (6.88), followed by climate (6.43), culture (5.95), restaurant services (5.67), accommodation (5.4), and prices (4.66), while entertainment and shopping have the lowest rate (2.65).

Figure 29 Perception of the quality of products and services, heritage and climate



This means that Gospić area is mostly appreciated for natural heritage, which is probably related to the vicinity of two national parks – the Plitvice Lakes and Northern Velebit, as well as Velebit Nature Park. Moreover, there are rivers, caves, mountains and forests in the area that attract visitors and it can be concluded that natural landscape and wildlife are key factors for tourism development in the County as a whole, especially because of their rich flora and fauna, with many endangered and protected species. With clean air and water and being unpopulated, Lika as a region offers a perfect escape from overcrowded and polluted city landscapes into a peaceful and quiet rural environment.

Lika is one of two mountainous regions in Croatia, and it has a continental climate. This means that winters are pretty cold, with temperature often going below minus 20 degrees Celsius, while summers are hot and sunny. This type of climate has been recognised as attractive by the visitors and it is suitable for development of all-year-round tourism.

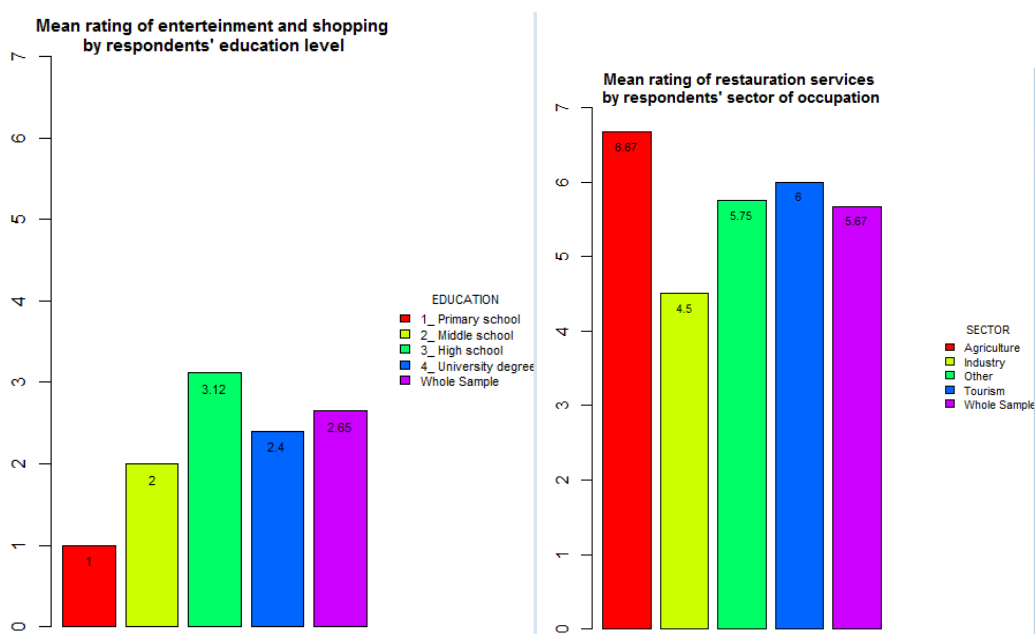
Lika-Senj County has a rich cultural and historic heritage, although it does not offer that many cultural events compared to other destinations that are more popular with tourists. Since the survey was conducted during Advent, it might be that the tourists recognised Christmas markets as a part of cultural offer, which might have increased their level of satisfaction with culture in Gospić area.

With the rates of 5.67 and 5.4, it can be concluded that the tourists were generally satisfied with the existing offer of restaurants and accommodation, but these rates also leave lots of room for further improvement of the quality of services.

Regarding prices, with a rate of 4.66, they are assessed as neither too high nor too low. Although Gospić has moderate prices when compared to other more popular tourist destinations in Croatia, with one of the highest VATs in Europe, Croatia is generally not considered a very cheap tourist destination. Due to 25% VAT, it can often happen that food and drinks in supermarkets are as expensive as, or even more expensive than in some European countries with much higher living standard, such as Italy or Austria.

Lastly, shopping and entertainment received the lowest score. This is not surprising, taking into consideration that in many small villages in Lika there is not even a small supermarket. Lika is still not a region which tourists visit to go shopping since the nearest shopping centres are in Rijeka, Karlovac, Zadar or Bihać. However, opposed to the villages and suburban areas, cities in the County offer basic shopping facilities, such as bakeries, pharmacies, supermarkets, stationer's or butcher's, to only name a few. At the same time, there are not that many places for entertainment in Lika, narrowing down its entertainment offer to spending time in bars that often close before midnight and having a limited offer of music or gastro events. Nonetheless, it would be worth to invest more in the promotion of the existing local events to a wider public, thus increasing the number of visitors and reaching the audience that lives outside the County.

Figure 30– Mean ratings of entertainment and shopping and restaurant services

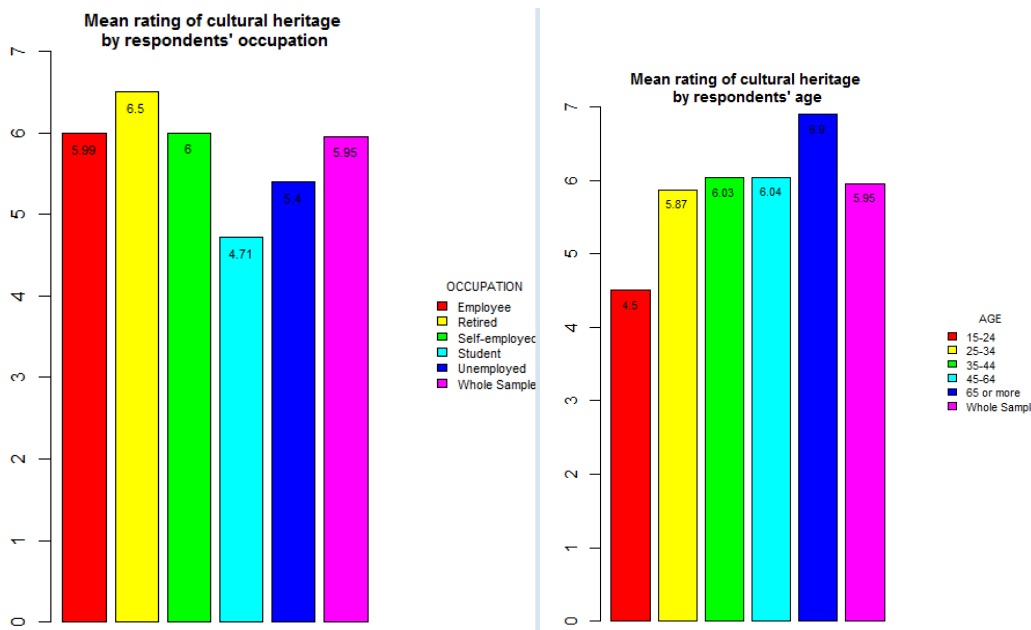


Mean rating of shopping and entertainment by respondents' education level show that those respondents with primary school were the least satisfied, while those with high school were the most satisfied about the quality of entertainment and shopping in Gospić.

Mean rating of restaurant services, as reported in Figure 30, illustrate different ratings between people with different occupations. The perception of the quality of restaurants by industry workers is very low while those employed in agriculture consider the same services close to excellence.

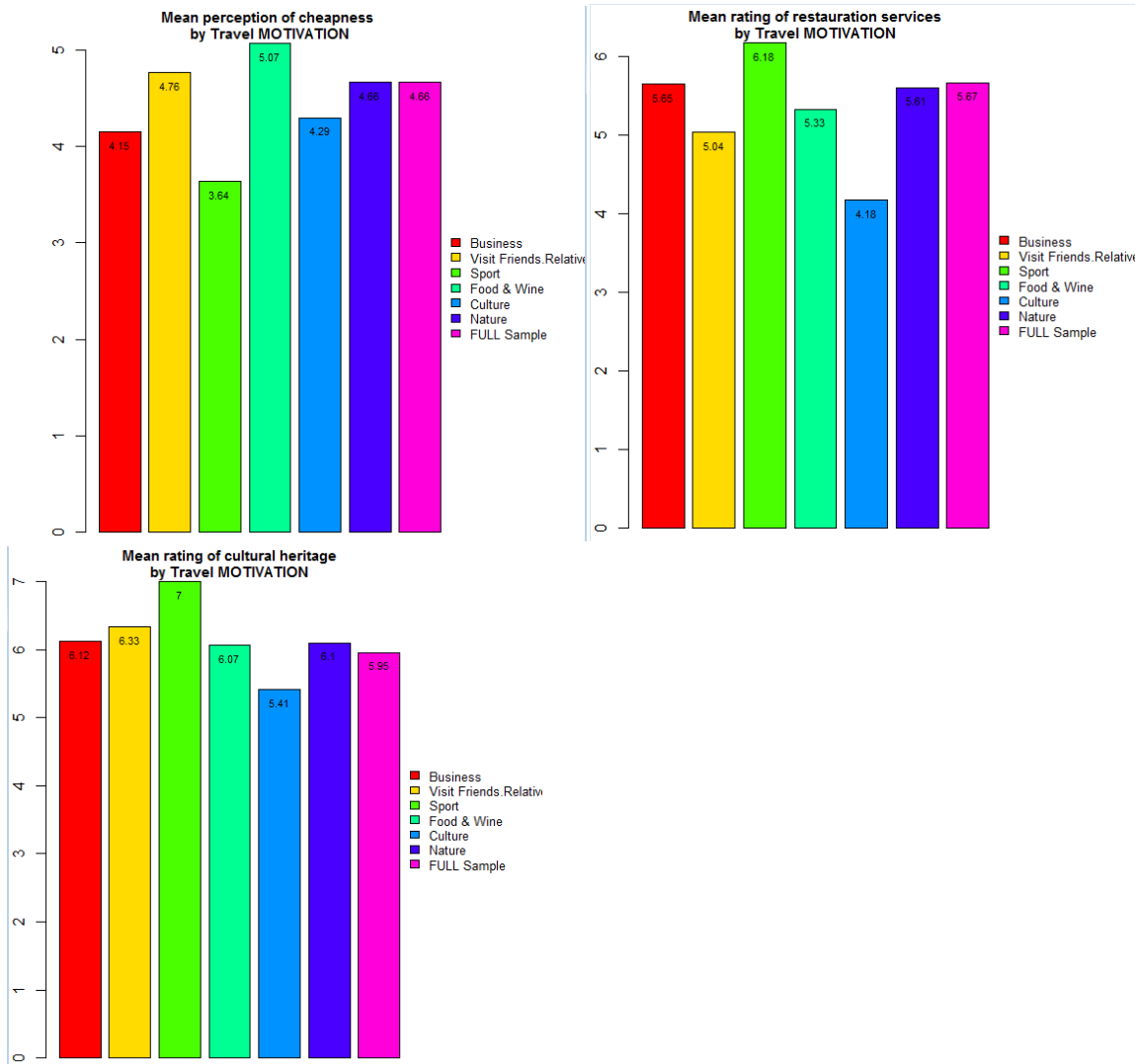
When it comes to cultural heritage, as reported in Figure 31, it can be noted that younger respondents who are students are the least satisfied category, while those who are retired and age 65 or older are the most satisfied with their experience of cultural heritage. This is an alarm that signals a need for introduction of new innovative tools as a means of representing cultural heritage, which might be more appropriate and interesting to younger generations.

Figure 31 – Mean ratings of cultural heritage by respondents’ occupation and age



Based on the tourists’ travel motivation, as shown in Figure 32, those travelling for culture were the least satisfied with the local restaurants while those travelling for sport, business and nature showed the highest rate of satisfaction with the quality of the services. It is significant to note that those tourists who travelled for culture were also the least satisfied with the cultural heritage, while those travelling for sport were the most satisfied. Since their main motivation for having holidays in Lika was connected with spending active holidays, it is possible that sport tourists are not as demanding as cultural tourists when it comes to the quality or variety of offer connected with culture, and were consequently fully satisfied with the existing cultural attractions.

Figure 32 Cheapness, restaurant service and cultural heritage by respondents' travel motivation



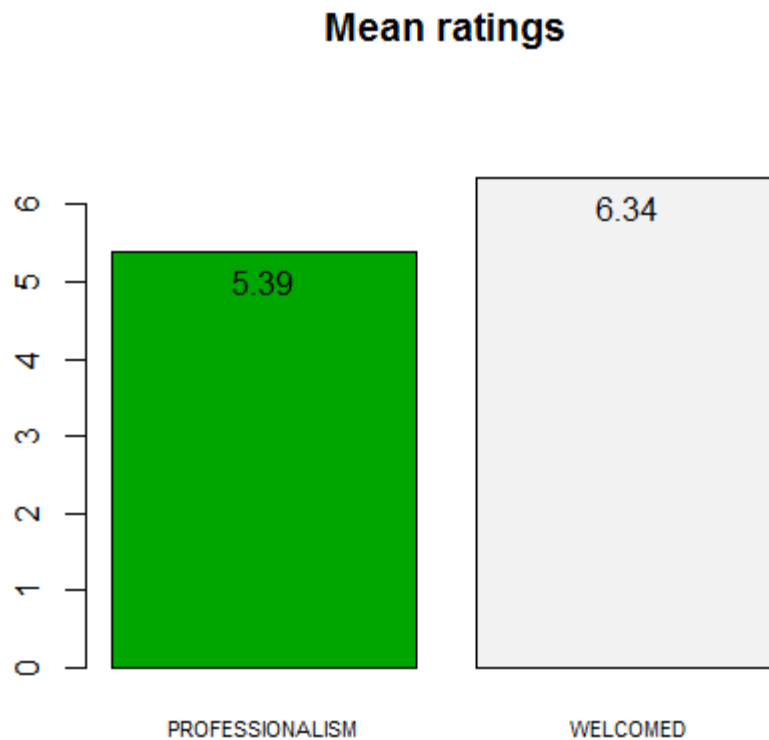
Speaking of the prices, it can be noted that those tourists travelling for sport motivation were the most satisfied, followed by those who came to visit friends and family, who came for business trips or because of nature. On the other hand, those travelling for culture were the least satisfied. This might suggest various things, which should be further investigated. First of all, it is possible that these categories of tourists are in general willing to pay more than the others. Second of all, they might be used to paying more in other locations, so they find Gospić area cheap, compared to these. Or, it might be that the prices are not moderate, but the quality of services was so satisfying that they

willingly paid as much as they had to. Negative perception of prices by cultural tourists could refer to poor quality of services, as this group is the least satisfied one in general. Since the cultural offer of Gospić did not satisfy their expectations, this might have influenced their opinion in such a way that they were unwilling to pay as much as they had to for what they got.

4.4 The tourism workers' attitude in Gospic

Based on how most of the respondents find the people employed in tourism-related businesses, the perceived workplace environment in the destination can be rated. For example, if the visitors think that the tourism-related staff is professional, it may signal a positive and productive work environment. With the highest possible score being 7, professionalism was rated with an average of 5.39, which means that most respondents believe that people employed in tourism-related businesses are quite professional in this destination.

Figure 33 Perception of professionalism and hospitality



When it comes to feeling welcome, the tourists rated it higher than tourism workers' professionalism, which might indicate that, although the tourists did not always meet professional tourism staff, they still felt welcome. It also highlights the need to put more effort into increasing the level of professionalism in tourism workers, which can be done by improving their hard and soft skills, but also by motivating them with higher salaries and other bonuses.

On the other hand, feeling welcome does not only depend on tourism staff since it is a feeling created in an interaction between the visitors and the locals and it expresses the overall satisfaction with the way they were treated by the locals. With a rate of 6.34, it indicates that the visitors found the residents to be hospitable and welcoming towards them.

Regarding the correlation between respondents' travel motivations and the way they perceive tourism employees, those who came to Lika for culture, to visit friends and relatives, or for food and wine, were less satisfied with employees' professionalism than the others. One of the explanations for this could be that the offer of various cultural sites and events in the region is poor and rating tourism staff perhaps only mirrors the dissatisfaction with their overall experience.

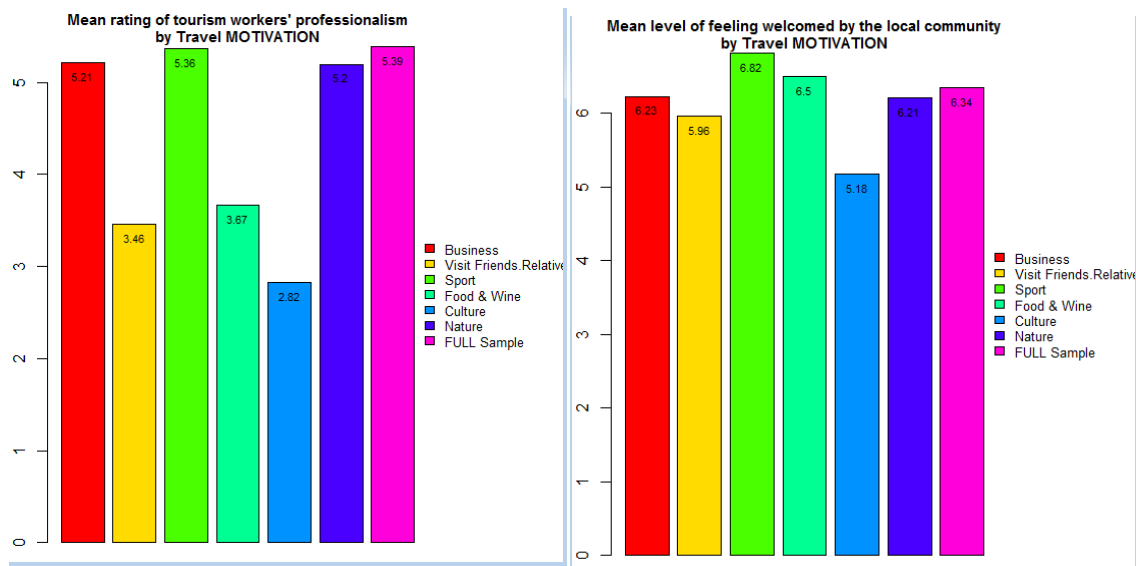
Additionally, the offer of food and drinks is pretty scarce in the region as a whole, especially when it comes to local gastronomy. It is often easier to order squid and chips or pizza than try typical dishes, like *kalja* (vegetable and meat stew) or *pole* (baked potato halves). Furthermore, employees' skills in restaurants and bars are possibly less proficient compared to those employed at hotels, which suggests a need for better training and education in general, in order to have skilled workers working at different tourism facilities. Those respondents who travel to visit friends and relatives have perhaps been at the destination several times in the past and have more experience with tourism employees from the destination than other visitors. This might explain their criticism and lower than average rates of tourism workers' professionalism.

On the other hand, those who wanted to enjoy nature or do sport activities were pretty satisfied, as illustrated in figure 34, which might suggest that the staff providing different services related to active holidays is proficient enough and knows how to handle tourists' demands. The same applies for those travellers who travelled for business.

While it can be noted that most tourists felt pretty welcome in interaction with the locals, the only group who is visibly less satisfied than the rest are those who travel for culture. As mentioned above, Lika region still does not have developed tours only for cultural purposes and neither does it have a

good offer of cultural events, which is probably the reason why these tourists are, in general, less satisfied than those travelling for other purposes. This implies that those visitors who had positive experiences and were satisfied with the service provided, also have the overall satisfaction rate pretty high. On the other hand, those whose main motivation for travelling was not met once they arrived at the destination, possibly perceive tourism staff as less professional, as well as the hospitality of the residents.

Figure 34 Mean rating of tourism workers’ professionalism and hospitality by respondents’ travel motivation

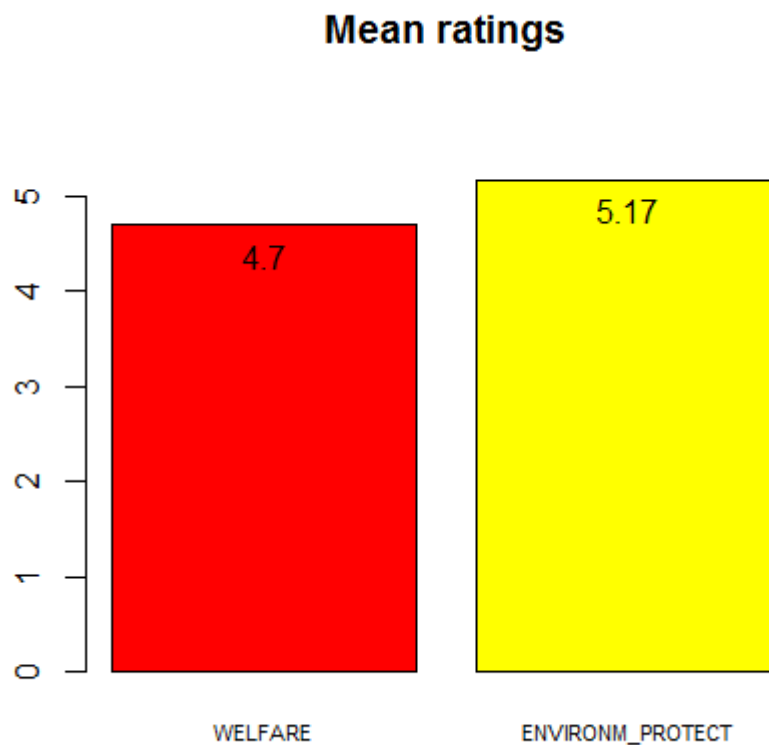


4.5 The perceived social responsibility in Gospić

With the maximum value being 7, the respondents assessed social welfare 4.7 and environment protection 5.17. This means that the visitors perceive that more is done to protect the environment than for social welfare, as shown in Figure 35.

Lika-Senj County is quite unpolluted, which means that the quality of air or water is higher than in other crowded cities in Croatia, which could be one of the explanations why the tourists rated environment protection relatively high.

Figure 35 Perception of welfare and environment protection

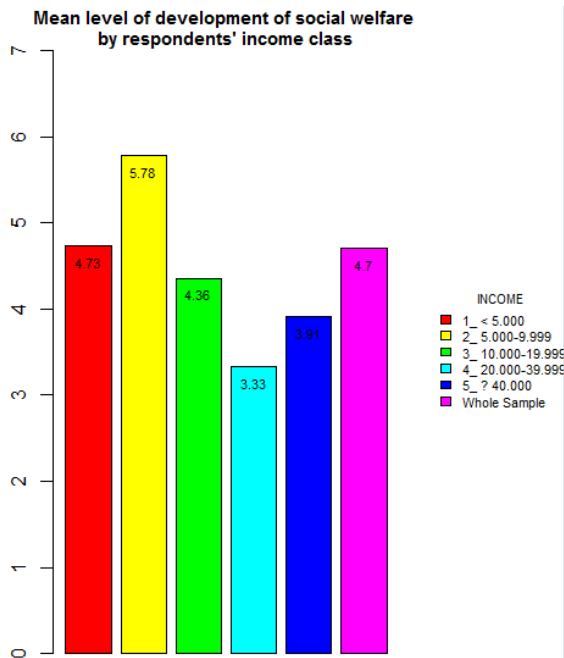


While it would be extremely uncommon to encounter a homeless person or a beggar in Lika-Senj County, perhaps one of the explanations why the tourists indicate that more should be done about social welfare is connected with the fact that there are many abandoned and empty houses, and to see a house damaged in the war is not at all uncommon. Moreover, these houses can be found both in the cities and the villages around Lika and they often indicate rural depopulation. Another factor that might have influenced the opinion on social welfare is a general lack of services and facilities. For example, most villages do not even have a small grocery shop, and with the elderly populating many

of the small villages, it could be possible that the tourists came into interaction with them and based their opinion on these encounters. To add to this, the local transportation most often does not provide services for these villages, which makes the life of the local elderly population very difficult and often dependent on their younger relatives, in case they need to visit the hospital or simply buy the groceries.

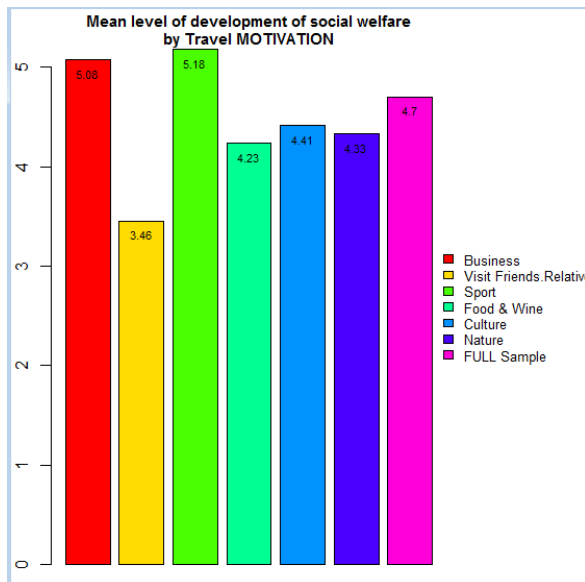
It is interesting to note that those respondents whose yearly gross income is up to 10 000 euro, assessed social welfare much higher than those who earn more. This might suggest that travellers who earn more money, come from higher social classes or live in countries where the social care system is more developed than in Gospić area. Their low rates of social welfare in Gospić could indicate that, when compared with the situation in their home countries or cities, Gospić area is much below their social welfare standard. On the contrary, those earning less than 10 000 euro gross a year, probably have to put up with similar or worse standard of living, which could explain why they were not as critical as the respondents who earn more.

Figure 36 Mean level of development of social welfare by respondents' income class



Concerning the correlation between travel motivation and the way social welfare is perceived, it can be noted that those travellers who travelled for visiting friends and relatives have the most negative perception of social welfare with a rate of 3.46, as reported in Figure 37. As mentioned before, travellers whose main motivation for coming to Gospić is to visit friends and family, most probably have deeper knowledge about the situation in Lika than those travelling for other purposes, and might base their criticism on various factors. First of all, since they have someone living in the area, they have most probably, through the interaction with the people they were visiting, got some information and insights that other travellers might have easily missed, especially if they did not have too much contact with the locals and based their opinions solely on what they observed while travelling around. Second of all, it is quite possible that these travellers have been to Gospić area more than once and some of them might have even grown up there. Therefore, their perception of social welfare in Gospić may be of a longitudinal kind, as opposed to those travellers who visited the area only once. It can be concluded that the tourists travelling for visiting friends and relatives most probably have based their opinion on social welfare under the influence of encounters with their friends and family who live in the area and have a deeper knowledge about the social responsibility than those who come to Gospić for holidays. The more deep conversations about the situation in the County with the locals they have, the more critical the respondents about the social welfare might be.

Figure 37 Mean level of development of social welfare by respondents' travel motivation



4.6 The reputation of Gospić

From the view of tourists and based on their experience, the overall reputation of Gospić was assessed as positive. Concerning the emotional appeal, the tourists feel relaxed in Gospić area, as well as excited. They have recognized Lika as an oasis where one can find quietness and tranquillity far away from the crowded and busy cities. At the same time, with its amazing nature, it is a perfect destination for spending active holidays outdoors, which is why excitement is one of the emotions the tourists associate with Lika.

This research has also shown that those visitors who travel for sport motivations or because of nature, are generally quite satisfied and they find the destination emotionally appealing. These findings are important for the prosecution of the EXCOVER because they indicate that to develop sustainable tourism in Gospić area, the emphasis should be put on spending time in nature and developing rural or active tourism niches.

On the other hand, those tourists coming for culture were the most critical and dissatisfied group. This is important for the prosecution of the EXCOVER project as it highlights the need to enrich tourism offer in order to develop cultural heritage tourism. Whether this would include better promotion of the existing cultural heritage, new and modern approaches, such as storytelling, discovering hidden cultural gems, or the combination of these plus more, should be decided in further phases of the project.

Another group that was quite critical towards many aspects of tourism in Lika were tourists who came to visit family and friends. These tourists have perhaps visited the area more than once or might have even lived there in the past, which is why they could be more aware of some elements that tourists who only come once miss the chance of noticing e.g. war consequences such as minefields, non-efficient public transport or the poor condition of some local and county roads that have not been repaired in years.

Generally speaking, when it comes to destination image, the tourists find Gospić area attractive. This is probably related to the natural landscapes of Lika, including national parks, Velebit Mountain, caves, clean rivers, vast fields, forests and many protected species. If the level of attractiveness of destination

image is high, there is more chance that the visitors would feel the urge to recommend it or revisit the location.

In general, the tourists rated the level of security and safety very high, which is a good sign, since feeling safe on holidays is of utmost importance for many.

Transport and accessibility were also perceived positively, probably because Gospić is situated close to the A1 highway, which enables good connectivity with the rest of Croatia. Furthermore, two main state roads connecting the north and the south also cross the region, which makes it easy to reach Gospić if one is travelling by their own vehicle or in organised bus tours.

The tourists were not satisfied with the existing marketing activities, suggesting that more should be done in order to promote Lika and Gospić as tourist destinations.

Gospić and the County are mostly appreciated for natural heritage, which is probably related to the vicinity of two national parks – the Plitvice Lakes and Northern Velebit, as well as Velebit Nature Park. Continental climate of this mountainous region was also praised, as well as cultural heritage, whereas the assessment of restaurants and accommodation showed room for improvement. Regarding prices, with a rate of 4.66 out of maximum 7, they are assessed as neither too high nor too low. However, shopping and entertainment were rated quite low, indicating that these are the biggest weaknesses which should be tackled when planning tourism development.

Tourism staff's professionalism was rated with an average of 5.39 out of 7 which is a positive rate, but also signals a need to put more effort into increasing the level of professionalism in workers, which can be done by improving their hard and soft skills and work conditions.

On the whole, the tourists felt welcome in Gospić area, which means that they were treated by the residents and the tourism staff in a hospitable manner.

Lastly, the tourists evaluated environment protection and social welfare. Whereas they are largely satisfied with the environment protection, rating social welfare 4.7 out of 7, indicates that they noticed some things that left a bad impression. This might be related to many abandoned and empty houses, often damaged by the war, which can be seen not only in rural landscapes but also in city centres.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

During December 2019 and January 2020, three analyses have been carried out in order to find out what the reputation of Gospić is like – Google Trends analysis, Non-tourist survey and Tourist survey.

Google Trends analysis showed that **Gospić is still not perceived as a tourist destination**. However, there are certain attractions around Gospić that are known worldwide, such as the national parks Paklenica and the Plitvice Lakes or Velebit Mountain. The analysis showed that the general public **mostly associates Gospić with beautiful nature and active tourism**. The most significant cultural event in region called *Jesen u Lici* does not show wider popularity, even though it offers authentic food and drinks, traditional and modern handicrafts and an insight into rich tradition and history of Lika.

In general, a better promotion of Gospić and Lika is needed to make them visible as tourist destinations. Google Trends analysis showed that the **most famous historical figure from Lika, Nikola Tesla, who is well-known all around the world, is an important resource for tourism development**. There is already a memorial centre in his birthplace which attracts a certain number of tourists but the results of Google Trends analysis indicate that not so many people associate Nikola Tesla with Lika or Gospić.

It is advisable for the future marketing and communication strategies to create a story or an experience around the keywords used in this analysis in order to attract more tourists and create an attractive destination image. Lika-Senj County and Gospić as its administrative centre have many desired qualities for the development of sustainable tourism – clean nature, rich history and many undiscovered places to visit but how to present and sell these to tourists will be one of the challenges for the EXCOVER project.

That marketing is one of the weakest points in tourism development of Gospić was also confirmed while interviewing the tourists for Non-visitor survey. The majority of them thought that the marketing and communication initiatives concerning Gospić are very ineffective. This could explain why they decided not to visit Gospić and instead went travelling to other destinations in Croatia and it is a red alarm for the development of tourism in the area.

Those tourists who chose not to visit Gospić at the time of the interviews, named different reasons why they might visit it one day. Their motivation can discover some aspects of Gospić's reputation and can be a good basis for development of tourism. First of all, they mentioned nature and wildlife in general but also more precisely two national parks – the Plitvice Lakes and Northern Velebit. Moreover, they mentioned Nikola Tesla and a desire to taste local food, while the feeling they connect with Gospić is relaxation.

On the other hand, these are some of the **reasons that repel them from visiting Gospić: lack of tourism facilities, underdevelopment and remoteness, poor branding and promotion of Lika, no sea, no entertainment, bad connectivity or poor Internet connection.**

Lastly, Tourist survey shows that the overall reputation of Gospić is positive. Concerning the emotional appeal, the **tourists feel relaxed in Gospić area**, as well as excited, which is most probably related to peaceful atmosphere of small towns and villages and spending active holidays outdoors.

Other findings indicate that those visitors who travel for sport motivations or because of nature, are generally quite satisfied and they find the destination emotionally appealing. On the other hand, those **tourists coming for culture were the most critical and dissatisfied** group. Another group that was quite critical towards many aspects of tourism in Lika were tourists who came to visit family and friends.

This is important for the prosecution of the EXCOVER project as it highlights the need to enrich tourism offer in order to develop cultural heritage tourism. At the same time, the majority of tourists found natural environment in Gospić area appealing, which highlights the importance of developing sustainable tourism based on spending time in nature.

Generally speaking, when it comes to destination image, the tourists find Gospić area attractive. This is probably related to the natural landscapes of Lika. The level of security and safety was rated very high, and transport and accessibility were also perceived positively, probably due to the A1 highway, which enables good connectivity with the rest of Croatia.

Continental climate of this mountainous area was also praised, as well as the cultural heritage, whereas the assessment of restaurants and accommodation showed room for improvement.

Same as the non-visitors, the visitors were not satisfied with the existing marketing activities, suggesting that more should be done in order to promote Lika and Gospić as tourist destinations.

Tourism staff's professionalism was rated positively and the survey shows that the tourists feel welcome in Gospić area. The prices are assessed as neither too high nor too low. However, shopping and entertainment were rated quite low, indicating that these are the weaknesses which should be tackled when planning tourism development.

To conclude, regardless of many weaknesses, such as a poor promotion or no entertainment, Gospić has a positive reputation with the visitors and non-visitors, based mainly on two things – beautiful nature and relaxation, which is a good foundation for further activities of the EXCOVER project.