

## The Role of Klapa Singing in the Promotion of Cultural Tourism in Omiš: Visitors' Attitudes And Opinions

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### Abstract

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism which opens cultural and historical heritage to tourists, adapting the tourist offer to their demands. Klapa singing makes part of Croatian cultural heritage. This tradition older than 150 years gained a confirmation on its value through the inclusion at the UNESCO list of Intangible Heritage of Humanity, so it can be considered as a valuable resource in creation of the cultural offer in tourism. The goal of this research was to show how the Basic principles of four phase public relations model can help create the cultural offer in a more quality way. 283 respondents answered on the structured questionnaire which helped us obtain the information on their social and demographic status, attitudes towards the offer in Omiš, klapa singing and the offer to listen klapa singing. Based on the results obtained through questioning of their opinions and attitudes, we stated their perception of the klapa singing offer in town, as well as some disadvantages of the offer. Unsufficient informing of tourist, the lack of information on klapa singing and the bad offer proved to be main problem in the offer of Omiš. In the discussion, we suggested some methods which could help in offer improvement. In this way it has been shown how to keep planned relations with tourist public, which has been somewhat neglected method of communication with tourists since now.

**Keywords:** klapa singing; cultural tourism; Intangible Heritage of Humanity; public relations

### 1. Introduction

The main role of public relations in tourism is providing information to the public and potential tourists on concrete offers, and thereby affecting the popularity and image of a specific destination. Since the tourist offer in Croatia plays a role of an important driver of the economy and tourists become more and more demanding, request for creation of new services and their proper promotion is set in front of the tourist offer managers. Effectiveness of public relations depends largely on the planned approach to the issue and on the conduct of the integral process of informing and evaluating.

One of the most effective methods of promotion of individual subjects in tourism is specially planned events. Planned situation out of the daily happenings aim to teach people, celebrate something, entertain or provoke the interest for a certain topic or product within certain groups of people. Given the fact that this type of presentation of different products or themes is very popular, the demand for this type of presentation gradually increases and planned events become more conventional means of promotion. Through planned events specific entities or organizations want to reach the target public, strengthen its reputation and highlight its own uniqueness. Although nowadays almost the whole industry of event planning has developed, special events are nothing new. Since olden times people organised special days, such as celebrations, festivals, feasts, etc.

The use of special events with the goal of tourism promotion in Croatia is an established method of promotion and it is regularly chosen as a channel of public relations. However, research conducted in 2009 has shown that Regional Tourist Boards in Croatia do not approach public relations strategically (Jugo, Tomić and Katica, 2009). Although most boards think that public relations are important, it is used to a much lesser extent than classic advertising and other means of promotion. The disadvantage of these methods of promotion is definitely a one-way communication and absence of feedback from the tourists. Some of them use services of the Institute for tourism in order to measure feedback, but as it can be easily seen on the example of one of their research<sup>1</sup>, their methodology includes collecting information about tourists indirectly via local people. Collecting data directly from tourists is being done rarely and usually only locally. This is certainly not enough if we want a better promotion. Searching for feedback directly from tourists is an exhaustive and demanding job, but it is also a necessary step in order to approach tourists in a better way and to provide

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iztg.hr/UserFiles/file/TADS-2013.pdf> (13.11. 2014.)

a better offer. In this way, we could expand the offer, which is currently mainly based on natural resources such as the sun and the sea. Also, expanding the offer would lead to tourism strengthening in whole Croatia. This study was initiated to demonstrate a process of complete and planned relationship with the tourist public on the example of the tourist destination such is the town of Omiš. The focus of research has been put on the Festival of klapa singing in Omiš, whose goal is to expand the interest for this type of singing and which makes part of the cultural heritage of Croatia. Given that the visitors which make one of 6 most important target publics in tourism communication (Deutschl, 2006), are present in Croatia only seasonally, the research is especially directed to questioning of their opinions and attitudes. These data will be relevant to the local and county tourist boards, because this part of tourist public was not included in previous researches. Becoming familiar with their attitudes and opinions can help create better communicational tool and offer.

### 1.1 Cultural tourism

Tourism comprises the activities of people traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year. This does not include some involuntary purpose of the journey, like involuntary hospital stay with medical treatment prescribed by doctor, stay in prison or in military service (Marušić and Ivandić, 2013). Cultural tourism is a form of tourism which opens cultural and historical heritage to the tourists, adapting tourism offer to their requirements. Cultural tourism is defined as a person's visits to the place outside their permanent residence motivated in whole or in part with the interest in history, art, heritage or way of life of the locality, region or country that they are visiting (Jelinčić, 2008). The main resource of cultural tourism is the cultural heritage of the people that offers it. Given that Europe has extremely rich cultural heritage, this heritage takes a central place in the development of European tourism and is the most important generator of it (Gredičak, 2008). The most common users of cultural tourism are persons of high socio-economic status, higher education and often with interest in the field of cultural industries (Richards, 2005). Their main motive for visit is the experience of authentic ambience in its original form, getting new experiences in contact with the local population, getting to know the customs of the people as well as the material objects important for the location they are visiting. Croatia is, like Europe, extremely rich in tangible and intangible cultural assets. These cultural assets are a great tourism resource of Croatia, and therefore an important factor in the development of integral offer of destinations in Croatia. Protection and preservation of cultural heritage provides the stability of cultural values and the potential for further development of Croatian tourism, its affirmation, stimulation of economic competitiveness and a higher quality of life in the European environment.

### 1.2 Cultural heritage

Culture comprises set of values, beliefs, behaviours, symbols and forms of learned behaviour of the local community. It can be defined as the way of life that the society shares and that is being transferred from one generation to another and is considered as being specific for a certain social group (Jelinčić, 2008). All cultural heritage of mankind could be divided into tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Physical or "tangible cultural heritage" includes buildings and historic sites, monuments, and other considered as worth saving for the future. This includes objects significant for archaeology, architecture, science or technology of a specific culture. Intangible cultural heritage represents customs, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and manifestations of spiritual creativity transmitted and which societies, groups or individuals recognise as its heritage. They are manifested in language, dialect, speech and in word of mouth. Furthermore, it includes folklore creativity in the fields of music, dance, legends, games, rituals, traditions, mythology; traditional arts and crafts; knowledge and practices concerning nature; cultural spaces where traditional folk values can be found in greater extent and places where the stories were told, fairs, feasts and processions were held (Jelinčić, 2008). By transmission from one generation to another communities and groups recreate the intangible cultural heritage in harmony with the environment in which they live, in interaction with the nature and historical conditions. Intangible cultural heritage represents the identity of the people and groups of people and ensures their continuity of life. The preservation of intangible cultural heritage promotes, supports and develops cultural diversity and human creativity.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognised in 1972 the need to classify and protect intangible cultural heritage of the world in order to prevent the possible loss of recognition of cultural diversity an identity of each nation. Thirteen phenomena in the field of intangible cultural heritage were protected in Croatia. In the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage of humanity are included: annual carnival bell ringers' pageant from the Kastav area, Lacemaking in Croatia, Spring procession of Ljelje/Kraljice (queens) from Gorjani, Procession Za Križen (Following the Cross) on the island of Hvar, Festivity of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik, Traditional manufacturing of Children's wooden toys in Zagorje, two-part singing and playing in the Istrian scale, Sinjska alka (a knights' tournament in

Sinj), Ojkanje singing, Gingerbread craft from northern Croatia – Licitar, Bečarac singing and playing, Nijemo Kolo, silent circle dance and klapa multipart singing. This paper is focused on klapa singing.

### 1.3 *Klapa singing*

In order to get a clear picture of the klapa singing value in the overall tourist offer, it is important to consider its past and historical development to better understand the identity of this cultural phenomenon.

The concept of klapa singing emerges for the first time in Dalmatia in the middle of the 19th century (Buble, 1988). It was the period of Illyrian movement, and Croatian became more aware of their national identity, language and culture. Croatian ethnomusicologist Buble (1988) sees the roots of klapa singing in the mixture of Croatian and Italian culture during commercial trips which were very intense precisely in this period. In accordance with this assumption, klapa singing firstly occurs in coastal and island areas, which were commercial ports and the place of mixing of cultures.

The word klapa comes from Italian where it stands for a group of people, while in Croatian dictionaries it stands as a jargon word for fellowship, party, group, or clique (Klaić, 1966). In the beginning, klapas were composed of a small group of singers, mostly bound by friendship, common interests and mere love for singing. The songs were performed mostly in urban taverns, where singing was an ideal continuation to the atmosphere started with socializing, food and wine. After the tavern, the singers would often continue with singing on the city streets and squares, looking for those places with good acoustics, which contributed to the pleasure of singers themselves and the one of random passers as well (Čaleta, 2008). Over time, the klapa singing became a way of courtship, they would sing to the loved girls under a balcony or in the garden, depending on the affinity of the hosts.

If we try to describe the klapa singing in professional musical terms, we could say that it is polyphonic, usually four-part singing, homophonic and chordal, based on the main functions of major (Povrzanović, 1989). This polyphonic singing is traditionally performed spontaneously without leader. Leader of the song is usually the first tenor who begins the solo singing, an after him other singers include. The rhythm of these songs is often free (rubato) but also sturdy (giusto). Singing forms are different but four part form (ABAB) is characteristic. Such a description, although a little significant to an amateur, describes exactly the point of klapa singing.

With regard to the method of performance and customs that follow the klapa songs and the technique itself, klapa songs always contain the topic of love for girls, family relations, love for the hometown, sea, gifts of the Earth, and all the other treasures of the region in which people live, difficulties of labour's life and the life of seamen. Klapa songs celebrate almost every life situation of man in Dalmatia so anyone can easily identify with the song.

### 1.4 *Preservation of klapa singing tradition*

Today, one and a half century after the creation of klapa singing, this tradition is still preserved and popular almost in all the country, not only in Dalmatia. Switching to a more organized form of singing (not just spontaneous), and limitlessness of groups themselves according to age and gender of singers, are some of the key factors for the huge popularity of klapa singing. Besides, klapa singing has known certain changes since its beginnings, so today we can distinguish between different forms of klapa singing, such as traditional klapa singing, festival klapa singing and modern klapa singing (Čaleta, 2003).

#### 1.4.1 *Role of the Festival of klapa singing in Omiš in the preservice of klapa tradition*

In 1960s appears an increased interest of the general public for klapa singing. This is when the organisation of the Festival of klapa singing in Omiš started. First festival was held in 1976 (Povrzanović, 1989) with the aim to enrich tourist offer of Omiš and to transmit the klapa singing to a younger generations. The festival wanted to preserve and present traditions and encourage amateur practice of music. As the traditional klapa songs in Dalmatia are quite simple, mostly silent and slow with a repetition of stanzas, the choir competition eventually began with the greater harmony and beauty of performance.

Exactly because of this competing note of the Festival, the choirs eventually developed tendency to choose more complex songs where they can show their skills. As a result, a new expression of klapa singing begins to appear, and over the years, along with traditional songs a growing number of newly composed songs began to emerge because of the tendency toward complexity (Čaleta, 2008). Besides, the amateur groups of singers increasingly transformed into professional performers that no longer leave their performance to spontaneity, but practice much more under the guidance of experienced head they build their own talent.

Festival of klapa singing in Omiš initiated all these changes which led to the deviation from traditional expression, that is however still not lost. Although the klapa singing moved from the tradition, it gained on the popularity. In this way, some new music styles obtained the note of tradition which raises their value, and on the other hand traditional klapa singing performances expanded much more due to this popularisation.

Today, after almost half a century of the first Festival of klapa singing in Omiš, this Festival remains the most prestigious gathering place for klapas in Croatia. Numerous festivals and gatherings created on the model of this festival have not yet achieved the same image.

#### 1.4.2 Modern forms of klapa singing

As we already mentioned, the Festival of klapa singing in Omiš led to the development of the new expression, based on the traditional klapa singing, enriched with the more complex melodic and harmonic singing. After this change, the klapa singing experienced another important change, in the form of yet another style of singing. A range of social, cultural and political changes that have occurred in Croatia reflected in the music culture. In order to maintain its popularity despite social changes that influenced the music taste in public, certain klapas started to introduce different foreign popular styles and genres to the singing. Mixture of klapa singing and modern music resulted in even higher deviation from the traditional singing, but the popularity increased. It is evident from the increased interest for this sort of music by the people from all parts of the country. The choirs are beginning to perform at places where this sort of music is not traditionally listened to, but also a growing number of choirs are being formed at these places (Čaleta, 2008). An example for this is a formation of a number of klapas in Zagreb and Rijeka (cities out of Dalmatia), as well as the formation of outside of Croatian borders, especially in countries with Croatian emigration (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Argentina, South Africa). With the increasing popularity, they have become more present in the media. On radio and television music channels they are an indispensable part of the contents nowadays.

The other side of the coin in regard to the popularity is a bigger detachment from the tradition, which leads to the risk of authenticity loss. Numerous musicians and musical experts warn on the possibility of fusion with other vocal and instrumental forms. The risk for the loss of original klapa singing identity is present here, and it would represent damage to the Croatian cultural heritage. For the identity of the Croatian people, and especially of Dalmatian, klapa singing presents much more than entertainment through the music. Numerous generations that participated in creation of this tradition, seen klapa as life philosophy, escape from reality, basic need of reciprocity, friendship, communication. This is why we should not be surprised by the refusal to accept big changes in this valuable tradition.

#### 1.5 Festival of klapa singing as part of the tourist offer in Omiš

Klapa singing and the Festival in Omiš are an extraordinary opportunity to offer something original, authentic and valuable within the cultural part of the tourist offer. As it was the custom during previous years, Festival uses different channels for the promotion. This paper tries to give a detailed picture of the Festival's promotion strategy.

According to data collected by the Institute for Tourism<sup>2</sup> the most common form of informing tourists about Croatia is the Internet, followed by brochures, ads and posters, articles in newspapers and magazines. Traditional media such as television and radio take the last place in promotion. Based on this information we can make the conclusion that the most important method in informing tourist on the Festival of klapa singing in Omiš is the Internet, different brochures or ads. Insight to the webpage of the Tourist Board of Omiš (<http://tz-omis.hr/> 11/7/2014) showed us a minimum of information on the Festival. This web page, for which we assume that is often visited by tourists when looking for information, offers only some information on the date of the Festival and one sentence on the klapa singing. Official brochure does not provide additional information. This can be seen as a huge disadvantage from the perspective of klapa singing promotion and its inclusion in the cultural offer of Omiš. This research provides a complete review of the klapa singing promotional activities, which, as we already stated, has an extreme significance for the identity of people in Dalmatia and would certainly be very interesting to the tourists.

## 2. Research Methodology

Given that the visitors' opinions can be different and unpredictable and considering the existence of certain information we attempted to obtain in this research, qualitative and quantitative methods have been used. In this way we tried to

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iztg.hr/UserFiles/File/novosti/Tomas-Ljeto-2010-Prezentacija-HR-CROTOUR-23-03-2011.pdf>

obtain complete image of visitors' attitudes and opinions. Basic advantage of different method interference is obtaining of their answers to some key questions and the freedom of open answers.

## 2.1 Participants

The study involved 283 people aged between 22 and 65 years. Of 283 participants 55.1% were women (N = 156) and 44,9% were men (N=127). The average age of women was 35.5 years and 41,7 for men.

With regard to the country of origin the most represented were German (27,2%), followed by participants from United Kingdom (21,9%), France (11,6%), Italy (8,7%), Norway (5,6%) and Spain (5,3%), while other countries were represented in a small percentage.

Among the respondents 63.2% have completed college or university. When it comes to their income 45.9% of them come from households where the monthly income is less than 2000 euros, 32,8% from the households with the income among 2000 and 3000, and the rest (21,2%) comes from the households with income higher than 3000 euros.

## 2.2 Measuring instruments

In this research we used structured questionnaire composed for this occasion. The questionnaire follows methodology used by the Institute for tourism, but with somewhat narrower range of questions and themes focused on the specific situation.

First part of the questionnaire focuses on the age, sex, education and income of questioned tourists, in order to create a socio-demographic profile of an average tourist. Then, we questioned the motives for visiting Omiš and satisfaction with the visit and offer in the town. Third part is focused specifically on Festival of klapa singing in Omiš.

## 2.3 Procedure

Research was conducted in the town of Omiš in July 2014. The questionnaire used for this purpose was in English. The examiner set questions to tourists and wrote the answers to avoid situation of misunderstanding and random answering. Respondents were foreign tourists who happened to be in the town square at the time of research.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Croatia is traditionally a popular holiday destination exactly because of the beauty of the nature, clean sea and climate which is characterised by sunny weather. As this research has shown, most tourists come to Omiš motivated primarily by passive rest and relaxation (see Table 1). As the second reason for visiting they specify entertainment and gastronomy as the third reason. An insight to these results confirms already stated fact that for tourists Croatia is first of all the country of sea, sun and good food. From the perspective of cultural tourism, the fact that only 12% of tourists come to Omiš motivated by cultural offer and events is somewhat discouraging.

**Table 1:** Main motives of tourists visiting the town of Omiš (N=283)

Motives of visiting	N	%	Rank
Entertainment	121	42,7	2
Gastronomy	95	33,5	3
New experiences	83	29,3	4
Introducing natural beauty	74	26,1	5
Passive rest and relaxation	234	82,6	1
Cultural attractions and events	36	12,7	6

In the part where we tried to question the satisfaction with stay and offer in Omiš, we used 28 characteristics evaluated by respondents. These characteristics concern the domains of natural beauty, accommodation, food, hospitality of local population, offer in the town, etc. On the question how satisfied they are by a certain characteristic, respondents answered by marking the notes from 1 (extremely unsatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). Shown results (see Table 2) indicate the average values for each characteristic.

The table includes only characteristics with the lowest and the highest results. While most of results are less important for this research, the important fact is that tourists rated the variety of cultural events relatively poorly. This

shows that the interest of tourists for cultural offer is much higher than the possibilities they have available in the town of Omiš. Although cultural offer is not their primary motivation for the visit, it is evident that there is still room for cultural offer. Furthermore, in order to reach the goal of this research, it was important to question the specificity of klapa singing in total offer and satisfaction with it. From the questionnaire results we can see that 90,5% of tourists heard of klapa singing prior to visit. It was not questioned whether this is the result of informing on Omiš and Croatia generally, but obviously they know about this cultural phenomenon. From the further set of questions, the research has shown that the small part of them (36,4%) knows that the klappa singing makes part of UNESCO cultural heritage. 98% of them expressed interest in listening the klapa singing during the stay in Omiš. We can make some conclusions out of these results. First of all, the klapa singing is an authentic "product" that tourists recognize as something Croatian, and that they show the interest to experience this part of our culture. On the other hand, it seems that awareness on the importance of klapa for Croatian cultural heritage is not present enough.

**Table 2:** Satisfaction with different characteristics of stay and offer in Omiš (N=283)

Characteristics	M	SD
<b>Positively rated</b>		
Beauty of the landscape	4,25	1,414
Suitability for family vacation	4,28	1,373
Kindness of staff	4,35	1,561
Hospitality of the local population	4,29	1,694
Personal safety	4,46	1,437
Quality of food in the accommodation and restaurants	4,53	1,419
<b>Negatively rated</b>		
Variety of cultural events	3,09	1,593
Equipment and arrangement of beaches	2,93	1,634
Shopping opportunity	3,17	1,452
Quality of local transport	2,94	1,687

When asked to evaluate the offer of klapa singing events in Omiš, tourists gave an average grade 3,52 (of 5 maximum). This grade is in the upper half of the scale, but leaves place to improvement. After evaluation, they replied to questions focused on better understanding of the issues related to klapa singing. Questions concerned the method of informing on klapa singing, satisfaction with the information available, opportunities to hear klapa singing, satisfaction with their number and personal recommendation for the promotion of klapa singing. These questions gave more useful information. First of all, when speaking about information sources on klapa singing tourist cited: pocket guides (44,5%), brochures (35,6%) and Internet (11,9%). It can be said that they are moderately satisfied with quantity of information available and rated it with 3,41. Taking into consideration the fact that they often use the Internet as the way of informing, we can say that it still does not provide sufficient information. Other conclusion we can make from these results is that tourists get more detailed information on klapa singing from pocket guides, although they have some information on it prior to their visit.

In evaluation of the opportunities to listen klapa singing, tourist found them sufficient and satisfying. Evaluation of opportunities was rated at the scale from 1 (there are no such opportunities) to 5 (there are too many). They rated with 2,78 the number of opportunities and with 3,12 the satisfaction with them. Taking into consideration that the research was conduct one week prior to the Festival of klapa singing, we can say that the offer regarding klapa singing is not satisfying in comparison to the interest.

Tourist gave their promotion recommendations in the form of open answers, so it is impossible to cite them all. It is important to mention that they often proposed performances on the opened, spontaneous performances and similar. This suggests preferences for the traditional type of klapa singing performance.

After collection and processing of information, we can make a final conclusion of this research concerning the analysis of situation and recommendations for future activities and promotion of the Tourist Board in Omiš. Further consideration is based on four phase model of public relations, which includes defining of problem, planning and creation of program, taking actions and program estimation. Within this paper we will focus only on first two phases.

Defining of problem itself based on the information collected is rather clear. From the perspective of klapa singing offer in the town of Omiš as of one form of cultural tourism, the basic problem is the insufficient offer. As the questionnaire analysis shows, tourists are interested in listening to klapa singing and experiencing that part of the town itself, but it seems that actual offer is still insufficient. This causes certain dissatisfaction with the tourists, who are not informed enough. From the perspective of public relations, this is a problem that can be easily solved. Given a certain positive

attitude in tourist public towards the subject of klapa singing, a large part of the work could be said resolved. Town of Omiš has already the public interested in that content, so it does not have to make efforts in order to spread the interest, but simply make it more available to the interested public.

Accordingly, there may be specific plan solution to this problem. Important improvements can be achieved relatively quickly with the cooperation of local tourist board and cultural associations in Omiš. First of all, it is necessary to enrich the information in media, especially web sites. It would be appropriate to create a web site dedicated to klapa singing for foreign tourists, which would inform them on several languages on the history of klapa singing, social context in which it occurred and the importance for the society. It could also contain information on klapa singing events and gatherings. Contrary to the fact that this year's tourists did not get a lot of information about the klapa singing prior their arrival to Croatia, this would present a big step. Informing via Internet, as one of the global media, might increase their interest for klapa singing before the visit. In addition to creation of website, it would be useful to make a video material on the subject of klapa singing, together with some more videos of klapa performances. Another form of spreading awareness on the klapa singing would be klapa tours abroad. Of course, from the perspective of investments and gain of such a small town as Omiš, it is questionable how useful all those promotional and advertisement activities could be. It is important here that some of the investments which might seem unprofitable at the moment might have a long-term efficiency.

Furthermore, in cooperation with the local cultural and art associations, the town of Omiš could engage certain number of amateur klapas which would animate tourists in the evening by spontaneous singing in the town centre. This step rather concerns the improvement of the offer, than the promotional strategy. Given that the number of Festival visitors is limited; this would enable a greater number of visitors to experience the klapa singing in a living ambience. Also, this kind of spontaneous singing in the town would avoid big expenses of organisation and stage settings. At the same time, tourist would have an opportunity to get what they want in an original form. The benefits of this type of activity would be multiple.

#### 4. Conclusion

At the end, it can be seen that planning of public relations has numerous advantages in comparison with traditional advertising. Feedback from tourists is valuable and can provide the stimulation for further actions. This form of public relations is extremely important for tourism of Croatia in general, especially for cultural tourism. Namely, given the general perception of Croatia as the country of sea and sun, there is a tendency to neglect cultural content within total offer. On the other hand, there is a demand for cultural tourism, but the question is if Croatia is well presented to the tourist public. Contrary to the material heritage which is very often well-presented and motivates numerous tourists to visit Croatia (for example, Dubrovnik city walls), it seems that the time for immaterial heritage as the tourism initiator is yet to come. On the example of klapa singing in Omiš it has been shown that there is still a lot of space for progress and improvement of the offer. It can be assumed that the adequate use of all cultural goods of Croatia will be the key step in the future development of tourism. The extension of the tourist season beyond the summer months will not be possible only with sea, sun and climate. It will happen at the moment when the culture takes the main role in tourism.

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