



Geographia Polonica
2022, Volume 95, Issue 2, pp. 139-156
<https://doi.org/10.7163/GPol.0230>



INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
www.igipz.pan.pl

www.geographiapolonica.pl

EVENTS IN URBAN TOURISM – THE CASE OF ADVENT IN ZAGREB, CROATIA

Klara Sredanović • Ivan Šulc 

Department of Geography, Faculty of Science
University of Zagreb
Marulićev trg 19/II, 10000 Zagreb: Croatia
e-mails: klarakiric@gmail.com • isulc@geog.pmf.hr

Abstract

Research results provide an insight into the profile, motivation and activities of visitors of mid-size cities in Central Europe, using *Advent in Zagreb, Croatia*, as a case study. It is based on a questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of visitors of the event. The event that spread tremendously from 3 to 30 locations in the period 2010-2019, attracts mainly younger visitors with higher educational background, mostly from Croatia, Europe and East Asia, with a complex motivation. Two main groups of visitors are distinguished based on their travel distance, length of stay and motivation.

Key words

event tourism • urban tourism • Christmas market • Zagreb • Croatia

Introduction

The growing importance of events in (urban) tourism in recent decades corresponds with changes in tourism demand, travel habits and the shift towards the tourist experience. The role of events in reducing seasonality in tourism was recognised quite early (Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974), focusing on distinctive events that attracted high visitor numbers and had the greatest impact on destinations (Ritchie, 1984; Syme et al., 1989; Hall, 1992; Soutar & McLeod, 1993). The increasing number of events worldwide and their role in tourism (Laing, 2017) encouraged the profiling

of event tourism as a specific type of tourism (Getz, 1990; 2008; Connell & Page, 2009). Given its impact on local economies (Gammon & Holocek, 1983; Dickinson et al., 2007) and populations (Fredline et al., 2003), it became clear that event tourism needed to be properly managed (Getz, 1997) and studied (Getz & Page, 2015). This developed into an interdisciplinary research area of event studies (Getz & Page, 2007; Getz, 2012), which pays particular attention to tourists' activities and their satisfaction with the event (Ritchie, 1984).

Events often embody different elements of culture and heritage in urban areas and overlap with urban, heritage and cultural

tourism (Richards, 2001; Richards & Wilson, 2004). Specially organized cultural events aim to attract tourists, improve their image in tourist markets and stimulate urban development (Richards, 2001). Christmas markets have had a special place among these events since the early 2000s, and their attendance has become a Christmas tradition for many Europeans. In 2014, for example, there were 157 large and 2634 small Christmas markets in Europe, which together attracted almost 500 million visitors (CRR Research, 2014). The few studies that have been produced on this topic also highlight important aspects of these events on destinations. Brida et al. (2017) estimated the economic and social values of Christmas Market on the case of Merano, Italy. Casteran and Roederer (2013) investigated whether the authenticity of cultural events matters to visitors to Christmas Market in Strasbourg, France.

Advent in Zagreb is the largest Christmas market in Croatia and has attracted a growing interest among researchers. Roberson (2008) used Zagreb as an example to examine how tourists perceive capital cities. Marković et al. (2018) examined the experiences of visitors to Advent by age group. Lončarić et al. (2020) compared the motivations of tourists who visited Christmas markets in Zagreb and Karlovac. However, a more comprehensive analysis of the motivation of visitors, their activities, and the impact of the event on tourism in the city is still lacking, which encouraged the authors of this paper to fill this gap. The Institute for Tourism Zagreb (2012), which conducts detailed surveys TOMAS on visitor attitudes and spending in Croatia, published the results of their study in Zagreb in 2012, which can be compared with the results of this research.

This research aims to investigate the development of Zagreb Christmas Market, which attracts a growing number of visitors, and its characteristics. Therefore, the objectives of this work are: (1) to analyse the development of Zagreb Christmas Market, (2) to determine the profile of visitors, (3) to study their motivation and activities in the city, and (4) to obtain

information about the characteristics of their arrival and stay. After the theoretical background of the research and a brief description of the methodology, the results are presented and discussed in chapters that correspond to the previously defined objectives.

Theoretical approach

Urban tourism

Urban tourism includes all tourism activities in which cities are the main destination and point of interest (Page, 1995). Urban tourism is defined by the geographical area and can include different types of tourism (e.g. event, cultural, heritage or entertainment tourism). The intensive growth in urban tourism corresponds to the post-industrial era in the 1980s and the deindustrialization of cities (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014). Cities were transformed from places of production to places of consumption, while some used urban tourism to revitalize former industrial zones (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014) and/or gave tourism a major role in economic strategies (Sharon et al., 2013). Urban tourism has particularly benefited from the development of low-cost air travel and online systems for booking accommodation, transport and other services, which stimulated *short breaks* in the city (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014).

Urban tourism has special characteristics compared to other special interest tourism (Ashworth & Page, 2011). Urban tourist attractions tend to be very diverse and highly concentrated in rather small areas known as *city tourism zones*, and are accompanied by tourist services such as hotels, restaurants, bars, gift shops, etc. (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014). Urban tourism is largely based on facilities that were originally aimed at the local population (e.g. museums, sports halls, theatres, etc.), but became attractive to tourists due to the diversity of their services and offers (Edwards et al., 2008). In addition, urban areas usually have developed infrastructure and a variety of services, which stimulates tourism development and can support a higher number

of visitors (Ashworth & Page, 2011). Urban tourists are highly attracted to large cities, as opposed to small towns (Law, 1996). Nevertheless, urban areas are rarely solely dependent on tourism, which is usually just one economic activity in a complex urban economic system (Ashworth & Page, 2011). However, cities cannot automatically be treated as tourism cities, but must meet certain conditions. According to Van Den Berg et al., (1995), a tourist city must be able to provide tourists with five basic elements: (1) primary products (tourist attractions), (2) secondary products (accommodation, entertainment and tourist services), (3) external accessibility (transport accessibility of the destination to source markets), (4) internal accessibility (public transport and tourist signs), and (5) image of the city in the market.

The motivation for visiting cities is quite complex and varied. From many categorizations of urban tourism, Sharon et al. (2013) made a classification according to the primary motive of tourists, using European Mediterranean as an example area, and defined four types of urban tourism – sea and sun tourism, culture tourism, visiting friends and relatives, and business tourism. Coastal tourism predominates in coastal cities and usually involves the main holiday (Sharon, 2013). Cultural tourism is the result of a rich and diverse cultural offer, especially in Europe, which has become the most important cultural destination in the world (Youell, 1998). Moreover, culture is one of the fastest growing travel motivations (Sharon, 2013), stimulated by increased life expectancy and economic prosperity that enable more travelling, even in old age (Law, 1996). The category of visiting friends and family (VFR) includes a heterogeneous group of travellers mixed with other visitor groups. Moscardo et al. (2000) point out that VFR is rarely a sole reason for travel, but often represents a combination of motives and leads to participation in several tourist activities at the destination. As these visitors often return to destination due to social obligations, they are desirable in any city because they do not require a large investment

and their satisfaction with the destination is confirmed by their repeated visits (Law, 1996). Business tourism refers to travel for business purposes (e.g. meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions), but they also participate in tourism activities in the destination (Law, 1996). These tourists are highly sought after in urban destinations due to their higher average expenditure (Sharon, 2013), which is due to the fact that their travel expenses are covered by their companies and they spend their own money on tourism activities.

Tourism brings great benefits to cities; it contributes to the strengthening of local identity and to the well-being and stability of local population (Marcouiller, 1997). Cities invest in cultural attractions and infrastructure to improve their position in international tourism and to encourage the development of other economic activities (Russo, 2002). Particular attention is paid to cultural events, which prove to be a resource to improve the image of the city through the revitalization of streets and to increase the pride of the local population (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Although the overall impact of tourism on a city is perceived as positive, Glasson's (1994) findings showed that a proportion of local people blame tourism for (increased) crowding, noise, litter and crime. Crowds often provoke negative criticism of tourism, which is why Hall et al., (2004) suggest that destinations should determine their carrying capacity.

Event tourism

One of the main groups of attractions that draw visitors to cities are events. Before they were defined as special interest tourism, events that attracted large numbers of visitors were called *special events*, *mega-events*, or *specific types of events*. The term event tourism was coined in the late 1980s and became widely used after Getz (1990) used it to define the framework for organizing and developing events and destination marketing (Getz, 2008). As events usually take place in cities and are based on cultural events, they overlap with urban and cultural tourism,

but are rarely accepted as stand-alone special interest tourism (Getz, 2008).

The term *event* is often used synonymously with the term *festival*, although the meaning is different. The term event is much broader and represents a happening at a specific place and time, usually of some importance, celebrating or commemorating a special occasion (Westcott & Anderson, 2020). It has a specific program, a profile of visitors and a defined duration (Jovanović & Delić, 2010). A festival is a type of event that involves a public celebration that conveys specific meanings to participants and spectators through a kaleidoscope of activities (Goldblatt, 2001). It usually includes a periodic showcase of artistic, cultural, folkloric, cinematic and other performances (Hrvatski leksikon, 2019). Each event has a specific goal, spatial distribution, duration and certain impact on the local community (Dickinson, 2007). They are attractive to visitors because each event is spatially and temporally specific and offers an outstanding and unique experience (Dickinson, 2007).

Different characteristics of events led to many different classifications. One of the most comprehensive typologies, based on the goal and program of events, was created by Getz (2008) and includes eight categories with corresponding subcategories. The eight categories are: (1) cultural celebrations – festivals, carnivals, commemorations, religious events, performances; (2) political and state – political events, VIP visits, royal events; (3) art and entertainment – concerts, ceremonies, awards, exhibitions; (4) business and trade – conventions, fairs, markets, (5) educational and scientific – scientific conferences, seminars; (6) sport competition – professional and amateur competitions; (7) recreation – sports and games for entertainment; and (8) private events – weddings, celebrations (Getz, 2008). Some categories are public and can involve a wider community, while participation in others is limited to certain groups of people (e.g. competition, business, trade, private parties etc.) (Getz, 2008).

Another classification that has proven useful is the *event portfolio model*, which classifies events by type, season, target markets,

and value into four levels visualized by a pyramid (Getz, 2008). The top of the pyramid consists of occasional mega-events that attract high tourism demand and bring high value and serve to create the city's image in the marketplace and/or in urban development (Getz, 2008) (e.g. Olympic Games). The second level includes periodic hallmark events that also attract a high number of visitors and generate a high value and aim to increase the attractiveness and profit of the destination (Getz, 2008) (e.g. Carnival in Venice). The lowest level of the pyramid includes periodic and one-off regional and local events that generate medium or low tourism demand and medium or low value for the destination. They require certain investments, are not necessarily related to tourism and their authenticity is often questioned given their emphasized cultural character (Getz, 2008; Casteran & Roederer, 2013).

As with urban tourism, the impact of event tourism on cities is perceived to be diverse and positive (Connell & Page, 2009). Events attract tourists whose expenditure generates income; they create a positive image of the tourist destination, contribute to its branding and positioning in the market, which makes cities attractive for investment. Events revitalise cities, parks and public spaces, making them more attractive and efficient. They are catalysts of urban regeneration, infrastructure development and improved marketing opportunities (Connell & Page, 2009). Cultural events, including Christmas markets, that attract tourists often target local populations, and tourism ensures the viability of some activities that would not be viable without it (Delaplace et al., 2018).

Christmas markets first appeared in Germany in the Middle Ages and in recent decades have gained great popularity worldwide, especially in Europe, and have become a global cultural commodity (Broeckerhoff & Galalae, 2020). They attract both day trippers and overnight tourists with different motives and have a rather high proportion of domestic visitors from surrounding regions (Brida et al., 2012; Delaplace et al., 2018).

Using Christmas markets in North Italy, Brida et al., (2012) divide visitors into three groups: Business people (who are on a business trip and visit the Christmas market because they are nearby or have nothing else to do), Christmas fans (visitors whose main motivation is the Christmas Market and its associated atmosphere, tasting food and drinks, shopping, etc.), and general tourists (who make a trip for different reasons; first, they want to relax and second, they want to visit the Christmas market) (Brida et al., 2012). Furthermore, Brida et al., (2014) segmented visitors into six clusters based on their motivations and the companions that determine their interests and activities while visiting a Christmas market. As highly seasonal events, Christmas markets are very popular among the local population, despite occasional overcrowding of public spaces, traffic congestion and lack of parking (as the example of Cluj-Napoca shows) (Egresi et al., 2021).

Research methods

The results of this research were obtained using *desk* methods, a field survey and visualisation in GIS. The *desk* method involved the analysis of statistical data on tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Zagreb. The field survey consisted of a questionnaire survey, interviews and field observation in all locations where *Advent in Zagreb* took place in the 2017-2018 season.

The aim of the questionnaire survey was to gain insight into the profile of visitors, their motivation to attend the event, activities in the city and characteristics of their trip and stay. The survey was conducted on an occasional sample of 146 participants of the event from 22 December 2017 to 6 January 2018 daily in the morning and early afternoon. Visitors were interviewed at nine sites in the city centre (marked in Fig. 1). Aware that the number of foreign visitors would not be highest in the period between Christmas and New Year, as they usually spend this time at home with family, the authors also targeted visitors who visit their families in Croatia during

the holidays, as well as day visitors, both of which generate high demand for *Advent in Zagreb*. As not all of them had already attended all the scheduled events of Christmas Market, the results of the survey had to be carefully evaluated and compared with results obtained by other methods. Almost two thirds of all respondents (64%) were from Croatia, while 36% were from abroad.

The structured questionnaire used in the study consisted of 15 questions of which 12 were forced-choice and three were open-ended. The questions were related to the following information: (1) socio-demographic characteristics of visitors (age, sex, level of education, city and country of origin), (2) number of previous visits to the city, (3) means of transport and use of special discounts when travelling, (4) use of accommodation by type, (5) planned length of stay, (6) motivation for visiting Zagreb and role of the event in the structure of motives, (7) role of marketing in the decision to visit the city, and (8) visit to venues and participation in activities inside and outside the event. The questionnaire was given to respondents in Croatian and English. However, many visitors refused to participate in the survey on the grounds that they were not proficient enough in English to complete the questionnaire, which was ultimately reflected in the structure of respondents by country.

Responses were analysed using the descriptive statistics method in Microsoft Excel. Multiple-choice responses were presented as proportions, while responses in open-ended questions were presented as proportions of the total number of responses. When analysing the questions about motivation and activities, all listed responses were included, even though some respondents gave more than one answer. On the other hand, when asked about travel, some international visitors indicated air travel and tourist buses organised by the travel agency, but the analysis only included air travel as the main means of getting to the destination from their home country.

As part of the field survey, an employee of the Tourist Boards of the City of Zagreb was

interviewed through a semi-structured interview, and provided specially prepared statistical data on tourism in Zagreb. Parts of the interview have been included in this paper. All spatial information about the visited places of the event was stored in a GIS database in QGIS 3.0 software and later used to create thematic maps.

After a brief overview of the development of *Advent in Zagreb*, the following text presents and discusses the results of the survey, divided into subchapters dealing with the socio-demographic profile of visitors, motivation and previous visits, accommodation and transportation, length of stay, activities and visited venues.

Development of the advent in Zagreb

Zagreb Christmas Market has quite a long tradition as a local event organized for the citizens of Zagreb. With the growing international tourist demand, local stakeholders saw the opportunity to transform the fair into an international event under the name *Advent in Zagreb*. Since 2010, the City of Zagreb and Tourist Board of Zagreb (TBZ) have made great efforts to develop new activities related to the market, create an image of a magical and exciting city during the Christmas season and promote it in Croatia and abroad.

In 2010, *Advent in Zagreb* was held at only three locations: two in the city center (on Jelačić Square and on Zrinjevac) and one at *Zagreb Fair* in Novi Zagreb, which was aimed at local visitors. The central locations hosted occasional music concerts and food and drink stalls selling simple menus (e.g. sausages, hot dogs and some pastries), tea, mulled wine and short drinks, accompanied by extensive Christmas decorations and lighting. In 2011, two new projects were added to the event, both located near the main square: *Fuliranje* and *Artomat – the Unconventional Art Fair* (Fig. 1). *Fuliranje* is a project that included stalls offering creative and more diverse street food menus, mostly with elements of Croatian gastronomy, which gave visitors

the opportunity to try typical dishes and specialties from all parts of Croatia. One of the most popular elements of the event, *Fuliranje* opened in two new locations in 2014 and one in 2017. In 2014, four new locations of *Advent* were developed, with ice skating in *Ice Park* on King Tomislav Square, as a completely new and different activity.

Most of the new activities and venues were developed in 2016 and 2017 (nine in each year), when the event spread to the historical core of Gradec, but also included some non-central locations – in Trnje and Novi Zagreb, with the *New Advent* in the *Museum of Contemporary Art* and *Ice Tale of Santa Clause* on the *Zagreb Market*. In 2017 and 2018, several cultural institutions joined *Advent* with their activities and exhibitions: *Croatian Railway Museum*, *Backo Mini Express* (small museum with miniature trains), *Klovičevi Dvori Gallery*, the *Vidra Theatre*, the *Europa Cinema* with Christmas films and even the Presidential Palace (*Advent on Prekrižje*). In 2018, the event opened a new location in Maksimir Park and the ZOO joined the project with programs dedicated to families with children. The inclusion of cultural and other institutions in the event may have been mutually beneficial – *Advent in Zagreb* enriched and expanded the program and continued to attract a growing number of visitors, while the institutions benefited from increased visits to the city (see Richards, 2001; Russo, 2002; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Edwards, 2008).

As can be seen from the map (Fig. 1), *Zagreb Advent* experienced immense growth from 2010 to 2018, transforming from a local to a hallmark event (cf. Getz, 2008) and creating a positive market image that further increased its attractiveness by opening new locations and taking on new projects. It spread from 3 to 30 new sites, but remained mostly confined to the narrow city centre (Lower City and southern part of Gradec), which occasionally experiences large crowds, especially on weekends (cf. Hall, 2004).

The development of *Advent in Zagreb* was accompanied by intensive marketing and promotion, including a website in five languages,

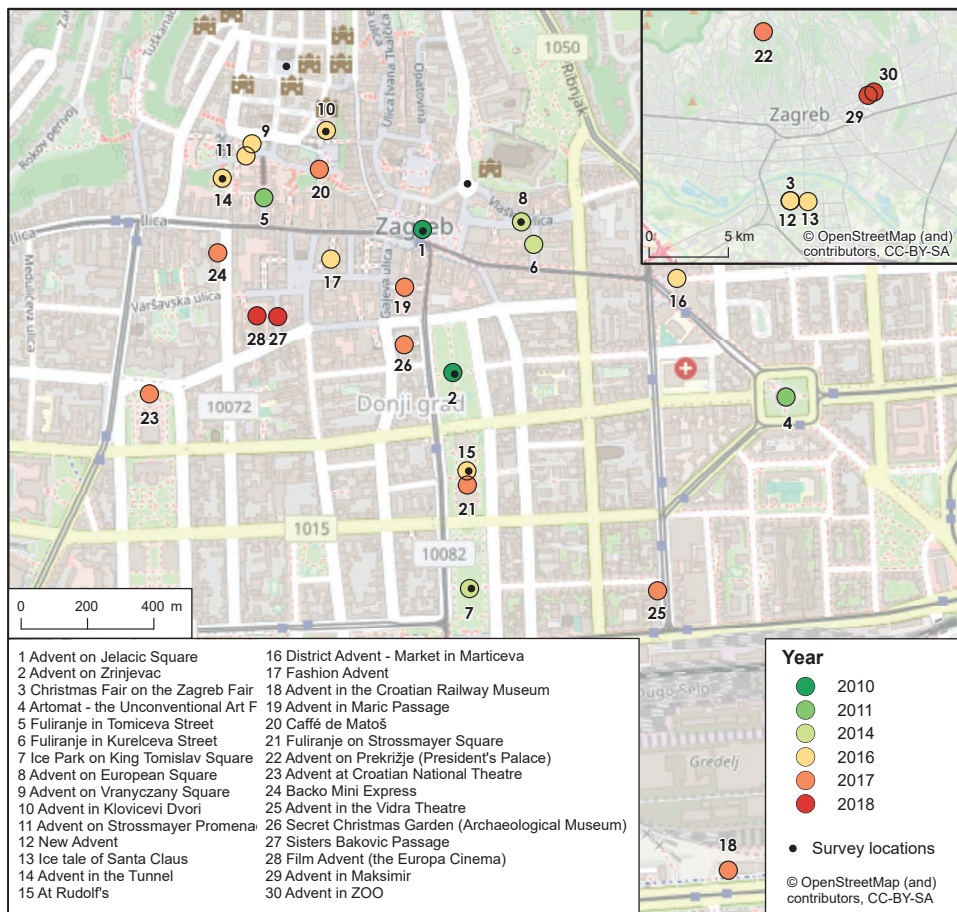


Figure 1. Locations of Advent in Zagreb by year of opening

social media profiles, themed souvenirs (e.g. cups, glasses, matches, glass balls, blankets, gingerbread boxes, etc.) (Tourist Board of Zagreb [TBZ], 2018). The event was promoted through a film at tourism fairs, congresses, business workshops, press conferences and study tours of travel agents to Zagreb. It is promoted on billboards in attractive locations in Croatia and neighbouring countries (Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Hungary, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), in the press and electronic media, on national and international TV and radio, on social media and with promotional bottles of water. The organisers formed a partnership and arranged a discount on travel with *Croatian Railways* and *Croatian*

Airlines during the event, as well as with *Turkish Airlines*, which was promoted as the official airline of *Advent in Zagreb*. In addition, public transport in the central area was free for all passengers on weekends during the event. The market image of the event was strengthened by winning the title of the best Christmas destination in 2016, 2017 and 2018 on the web portal *European Best Destinations* (TBZ, 2018).

The growing popularity of *Advent in Zagreb* can best be seen in the data on tourist arrivals and overnight stays. In the period from 2010 to 2019, when tourism peaked, tourist arrivals increased from 666,000 to 1.5 million, or by 2.2 times, while overnight

stays increased from 1.1 to 2.6 million, or by 2.4 times (Table 1). Zagreb has become the most visited destination in Croatia, accounting for 8.6% of all tourist arrivals and only 3.1% of overnight stays (Croatian Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2020). The immense increase in tourism is not only related to Christmas Market. Zagreb experienced a large increase in organized trips by international visitors (especially from East Asia, which include other well-known destinations, e.g. Bled in Slovenia, Plitvice Lakes, Split and Dubrovnik in Croatia, etc.), as well as a growing demand for city break holidays. However, since 2010, December has recorded significantly higher annual growth rates (7-38%) than the full year (5-14%), although both are high for a destination. The highest peaks in growth rates of more than 20% per year were recorded from 2014 to 2016, and continued at slightly lower but still high rates through 2019. As a result of a decade of rapid growth, number of tourist arrivals in December from 2010 to 2019 increased by 4 times, and overnight

stays by 4.5, associated with Christmas Market as a major attraction during this period (organized multi-day tours typically occur in spring, summer, and early autumn). The share of December in the total year increased from 5.1% in 2010 to more than 9% in 2019. However, the presented figures clearly show that it is wrong to claim that only *Advent* represents tourism in Zagreb. The average stay remained below 2 days, which is due to the already mentioned types of holidays that do not leave time to discover the entire tourist offer of the city (Tab. 1).

Unfortunately, the last *Advent in Zagreb* (2020-2021) was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as it was scheduled to take place during the second wave, which discouraged potential visitors from travelling. Moreover, Zagreb was hit by two strong earthquakes in 2020, which severely damaged many old buildings in the city centre (M5.5 with epicentre in Zagreb on 22 March and M6.2 with epicentre in Petrinja on 29 December). Therefore, from 2019 to

Table 1. Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Zagreb in December and total years 2010-2020

Year	Number				Chain index				Share of December	
	whole year		December		whole year		December			
	tourist arrivals	over. stays	tourist arrivals	over. stays	tour. arriv.	over. stays	tour. arriv.	over. stays	tour. arriv.	over. stays
2010	666,106	1,085,597	33,673	55,391					5.1	5.1
2011	730,945	1,183,125	36,070	62,834	109.7	109.0	107.1	113.4	4.9	5.3
2012	767,366	1,245,669	38,450	68,433	105.0	105.3	106.6	108.9	5.0	5.5
2013	876,604	1,415,891	45,393	82,284	114.2	113.7	118.1	120.2	5.2	5.8
2014	967,902	1,602,420	55,360	100,198	110.4	113.2	122.0	121.8	5.7	6.3
2015	1,077,778	1,804,290	70,538	123,721	111.4	112.6	127.4	123.5	6.5	6.9
2016	1,152,598	2,016,107	95,150	170,896	106.9	111.7	134.9	138.1	8.3	8.5
2017	1,286,087	2,263,758	111,296	201,482	111.6	112.3	117.0	117.9	8.7	8.9
2018	1,400,201	2,511,817	122,704	231,746	108.9	111.0	110.3	115.0	8.8	9.2
2019	1,454,019	2,638,962	133,648	249,574	103.8	105.1	108.9	107.7	9.2	9.5
2020	342,472	780,077	14,130	42,533	23.6	29.6	10.6	17.0	4.1	5.5

* Tour. arriv. – tourist arrivals; over. stays – overnight stays
Sources: CBS (2011-2020); City of Zagreb (2021)

2020, the number of tourists decreased by 70% throughout the year and by 90% in December, leaving only those who came to visit friends and relatives.

Because of this growth, the event has already received criticism. Although it is located in a core area with some historic value, excessive decorations, special Christmas lights, street stalls and stages often upstage heritage buildings and sites, which eventually go unnoticed by visitors. Some places with strong local ambience and sense of place are decorated to represent areas similar to other cities (e.g. *Fashion Advent* in the Oktogon Passage, which resembles similar passages in Paris or Milan), such as film sets (e.g. Sisters Baković Passage) or places from fairy tales (e.g. *Secret Christmas Garden* in the courtyard of the *Archaeological Museum*) (Casteran & Roederer, 2013). Most reviews referred to the seasonal transformation of the attractive King Tomislav Square, which is protected as part of the Lower City, into an ice-skating rink.

Visitors of the advent in Zagreb

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire survey on visitors to *Advent in Zagreb* in the winter season 2017-2018. The analysed responses refer to socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, their motivation and previous visits to the city, accommodation and transportation, as well as activities and places during their holidays in Zagreb.

Socio-demographic characteristics of visitors

The analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents included country and region of origin, sex, age and education completed. The survey included 64% of respondents from Croatia and 36% from abroad, which is in line with the results of other research on Christmas markets (Brida et al., 2012; Delaplace et al., 2018). Almost half of the domestic respondents were from Central Croatia, mainly from the Zagreb urban region (e.g. from the towns of Velika

Gorica and Jastrebarsko), who are able to attend the event in one day. Visitors from East Croatia, North and South Croatian Littoral each accounted for one sixth, while visitors from Dinaric Croatia had a share of 6%. Due to the relatively short travel time, respondents from North Croatian Littoral (Rijeka and its urban region) visit the market as part of day trips. Those from other regions (mainly Zadar and Split) come to Zagreb to visit friends or relatives and stay a few days, during which they visit *Advent*. International respondents came from Europe (56%), Asia (40%) and North America (USA) (4%). More than a quarter of international visitors came from the nearest Slovenia (29%), followed by Germany (19%), Croatia's main tourism source market, then Switzerland (4%), the Netherlands (2%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2%). Outside Europe, most respondents came from East Asia – Hong Kong (17%), Japan (13%) and Taiwan (10%) – main source markets of Zagreb in organized tours during the year. Structure of visitors by country of origin may have been influenced by the period in which the survey took place. In the period between Christmas and New Year, many emigrants from Croatia return to spend the holidays with their families, and Croats living in other regions of Croatia come for the same reason. Many people also take holidays between in this period, giving them more time to visit the Christmas Market in a day trip.

The sex composition consisted of 58% female and 42% male respondents, with almost no difference between domestic and international visitors. Most of the respondents were in the age groups of 21-30 years (41%) and 31-40 years (19%), followed by those aged 12-20 (14%). Other age groups participated less in the survey and had a smaller share in the structure of visitors – 12% in the age group 41-50 years, 11% in the age group 51-60 years and only 3% in the age group 61 and older. The age composition shows that *Advent in Zagreb* attracts a younger population, with an average age of 33 years, but with a significant difference between domestic respondents (31 years) and

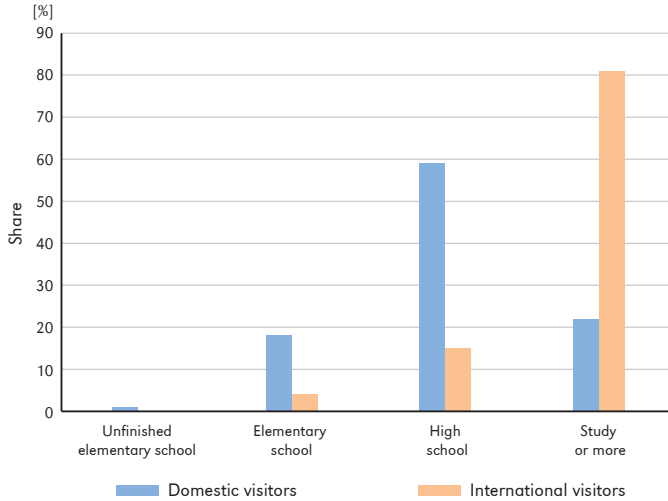


Figure 2. Educational composition of respondents

those from abroad (36 years). A higher proportion of younger visitors could have a positive impact on tourism, as they are more likely to visit the city in the future (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018).

The average education level of respondents is quite high, consisting of 43% with a university degree or higher and 43% with high school; 13% have primary education, while 1% are still attending primary school. However, Figure 2 shows large differences by country of origin, with 80% of international respondents having a university degree or higher, as they are slightly older than domestic respondents and mostly from developed urban regions. They are experienced tourists who have visited many more popular destinations and take multiple holidays throughout the year, some of which are city breaks. The educational level of domestic visitors reflects the general educational composition of the Croatian population and is partly the result of younger visitors, many of whom are still studying at school or university.

Motivation and previous visits

The motives for visiting Zagreb were investigated using two questions – one using the Likert scale, where respondents had

to rate how much the event motivated them to visit Zagreb, and the other (open-ended), where they listed the main motives for visiting. The analysis included all listed motives, although many respondents mentioned more than one. For 42%, the visit to Zagreb was fully motivated by *Advent*, for 17% mostly, for 29% partly, while the event did not motivate 12% at all. Although the event was clearly an important reason, motivations tend to be varied and quite complex (Law, 1996; Moscardo et al., 2000; Cohen, 2003; Sharon, 2013; Brida et al., 2012; Brida et al., 2014), and very different for domestic and international visitors.

Respondents' motivations for visiting Zagreb were sorted into six main groups (ordered from higher to lower): (1) sightseeing, (2) visiting friends and relatives (VFR), (3) celebrating New Year's Eve, (4) entertainment, (5) shopping, and (6) organized school trip (Fig. 3). International respondents came to Zagreb to sightsee (63%) and to celebrate New Year's Eve (25%), and less for entertainment (5%), all of which are typical motives for visiting a city (Sharon, 2013). The VFR category, usually treated separately from other tourists, was included in the analysis along with the other categories because they tend to participate to some extent in tourist activities in the destination (Moscardo et al.,

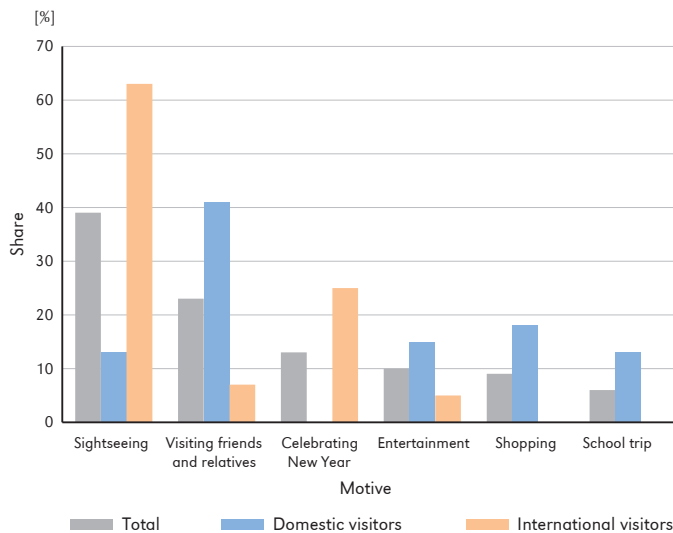


Figure 3. Main motives of respondents to visit Zagreb

2000). Their higher percentage (7%) refers previously mentioned VFR categories.

The main motive for domestic visitors is to visit friends and relatives (41%), while entertainment, shopping, sightseeing and school trips are equally represented and mentioned by few (Moscardo et al., 2000). Interestingly, none of the international visitors mentioned shopping, another typical motive in urban tourism, which can be explained by the different shopping opportunities in Zagreb and their home cities. However, these opportunities are still higher than in the rest of Croatia, which is why many domestic visitors associate *Advent in Zagreb* with shopping. Interestingly, none of the respondents from Croatia came to Zagreb to celebrate New Year’s Eve.

Visitor motivation is closely related to the number of previous visits to the destination. The proportion of respondents who came to Zagreb for the first time (29%) was slightly lower than the proportion of those who had visited the city 6 or more times (31%), representing two extremes of visitors in December (Fig. 4). The first group includes visitors primarily from abroad who came to sightsee and celebrate the New Year’s Eve. Although their visit may not have been primarily

motivated by *Advent*, the event may have played a role in their decision to visit Zagreb rather than another city. The second group consists of visitors from Croatia visiting friends and relatives and those motivated primarily by other reasons and actively participating in the event (Brida et al., 2014; Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018). Respondents who fall between these groups are less represented. They have characteristics of both types, with different and complex motivations, and their proportion increases with the number of previous visits, in favour of visitors from Croatia.

International visitors thus participate in *Advent* as part of cultural tourism, while domestic tourists visit it within their VFR stay (Moscardo et al., 2000; Getz, 2008; Sharon, 2013). Compared with the results of the Institute Tourism Zagreb (2012), Christmas Market helps to increase the proportion of loyal visitors who do not need a large investment and repeated visits show their satisfaction with the city and its offer (cf. Cohen, 2003; Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2018). On the other hand, first-time *Advent* visitors are likely to visit the city in a similar or different holiday type (Casteran & Roederer, 2013).

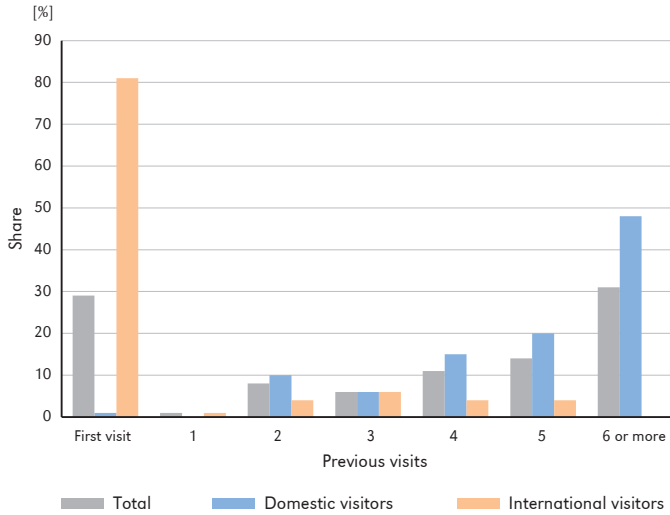


Figure 4. Number of previous visits of respondents to Zagreb

Accommodation and transport

After examining motivation of visitors, the analysis on their accommodation, transportation to the destination, and use of special offers and discounts in transportation. Considering the motivation, more than a third of respondents (36%), mostly from Croatia, stayed with friends and relatives (Moscardo et al., 2000). This was followed by accommodation in hostels (27%) and hotels (22%), while accommodation in households (e.g. Airbnb) was the least used (15%). The predominance of hostels over hotels, which are primarily used by international visitors, is consistent with the lower average age of visitors and is a primary and affordable choice for younger visitors (primarily ages 21-30).

Almost a third of respondents came to Zagreb by car (31%), 25% used regular bus lines, 25% tourist buses, 16% air transport and only 3% trains. The car represents the fastest and most convenient means of transport for visitors from Croatia, especially for those from Central Croatia and others who come on day trips. Bus lines are also mainly used by domestic visitors as the main means of transport, due to the poorly developed railway system, which was used by only

three respondents from Karlovac. International respondents mainly used air transport for long distance travel (from East Asia and the USA) and tourist buses organised by travel agencies for short and medium distance travel (from Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland).

Only 11% of respondents used a special promotion or discount for transport to Zagreb during the event. Most of them (81%) indicated the student discount, which is valid all year-round and not only during the event, overall only 13% used free public transport in the city. Only one person used a discount on train tickets, while no one used special discounts on airline tickets. The lower reach of promotions and discounts among the target population confirms that they are not communicated enough and that other modes of transport should be included. It also shows that these promotions are not decisive for the decision to visit Zagreb and *Advent*.

Planned length of stay in Zagreb

In contrast to the official statistics, this research managed to capture same-day visitors and the characteristics of their visit to Zagreb. In order to investigate the differences

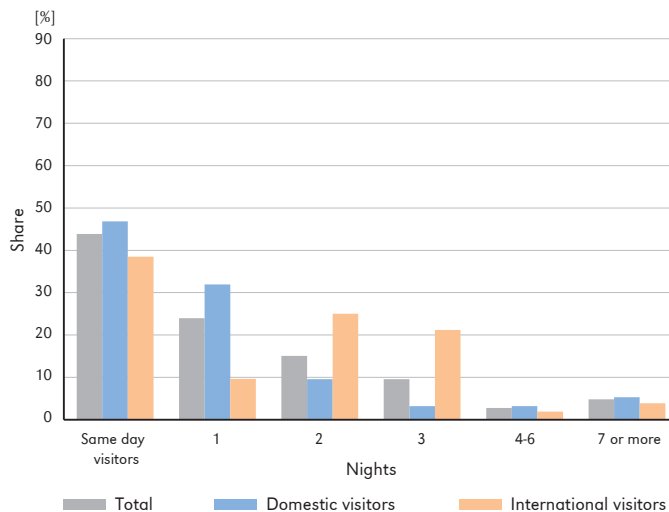


Figure 5. Planned length of stay of respondents in Zagreb

between same-day trippers and overnight tourists, respondents were asked how long they stay in Zagreb. As expected, 44% were day trippers, slightly more among respondents from Croatia than from abroad, while 56% were (overnight) tourists (Fig. 5). Most of the day visitors were from Croatia and Slovenia, where short distances allow them to arrive and depart on the same day. Their main motivation is to visit *Advent in Zagreb* and they mostly travel individually.

Most interviewed tourists spend 1-3 nights in Zagreb; respondents from Croatia usually stay only one night, while international respondents stay 2 or 3 nights. This group consists mainly of organized tourists whose motivation is related to sightseeing and celebrating the New Year's Eve, but once in the city they also visit *Advent*. Respondents who stay 4 nights or more are mostly individual tourists, mainly from Croatia, who have come to Zagreb to visit friends and relatives, but actively participate in *Advent*. Individual visitors usually arrive by car, bus lines, train and sometimes by plane, while organized tourists use tourist busses and planes.

Due to the prevalence of same-day visitors, the economic benefits of *Advent* are lower than those of longer stays and are mainly

limited to entrepreneurs and artisans who offer their products and services at the event. Therefore, local stakeholders should make additional efforts to develop additional tourism products and services that could keep visitors in the destination for longer.

Visited venues of the Advent in Zagreb and other activities

In order to gain insight into the activities of visitors, respondents were asked to mark the places and attractions of *Advent in Zagreb* that they had visited and to list other activities that they had participated in the city. Because visitors were also surveyed at locations that were not included in *Advent* (e.g. St. Mark's Square, see Fig. 1), the study succeeded in including visitors whose primary motive was not the Christmas Market itself, but who nevertheless all visited at least one of the locations. The results show that most respondents visited the axis from Jelačić Square (96%), Zrinjevac (85%) to King Tomislav Square (76%) (Fig. 6). More than half also visited *Advent* at European Square (70%) and Upper City. The most visited sites attract visitors with their central location and supply (cf. Ashworth & Page, 2011). Tomislav

Square attracts visitors with ice-skating in large *Ice Park*; Zrinjevac has a diverse range of food and drink stalls, musical events and offers a unique Christmas atmosphere. Jelačić Square has a smaller offer compared to the other locations (few stalls with food, drinks and handicraft products, as well as a stage for concerts), but as the main square it is visited by almost all visitors to Zagreb and is also on the way from the Lower City to Upper City and Kaptol. The venues in the Upper City attract tourists with various gastronomic experiences (*Fuliranje*), special decorations and a beautiful view of the town. Domestic tourists visit all sights to a greater extent, except for the release of the lanterns on Dolac, which are mainly visited by international tourists. On the other hand, fewer respondents visited newer *Advent* places, especially those connected with cultural institutions – e.g. *Croatian National Theatre* (18%), *Archaeological Museum* (8%), the *Vidra Theatre* (3%) and *Croatian Railway Museum* (2%). Domestic visitors attend more event venues than international visitors, who focus on attractions that are valorised in tourism

throughout the year (e.g. Jelačić Square, Cathedral). As expected, most venues are visited by visitors whose main motivation is *Advent* and, surprisingly, by day trippers.

The event places a special emphasis on cultural activities and promotes cultural events that take place in cultural institutions and churches (e.g. the Cathedral, *Croatian National Theatre*, *Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall*, *Ethnographic Museum*, *Art and Crafts Museum*, *Gallery of Archaeological Museum*, etc.). In this way, visitors are introduced to the cultural tourism offer of the city that exists outside Christmas Market in order to encourage them to visit Zagreb in the future.

Besides the *Advent*, most respondents participate in other (tourist) activities in the city (the question targeted leisure activities, therefore visiting friends and relatives was not included as an option) (Fig. 7). Two thirds go sightseeing and go to restaurants, half visit museums, galleries and exhibitions and go to bars, while only a few goes on organized excursions, go to the cinema and theatre or participate in sporting events and health tourism. These activities are in line with the usual

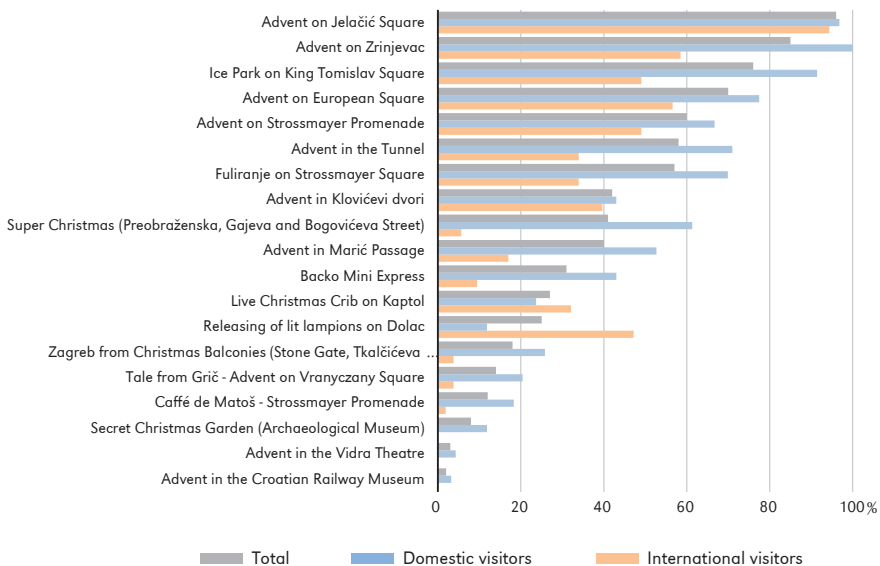


Figure 6. Participation of respondents in activities of the *Advent in Zagreb* (share of all, domestic and international visitors that visited each location)

tourist demand in urban tourism, a younger age composition of tourists and their motivation. However, international visitors participate more in leisure activities outside the Christmas Market (sightseeing, restaurant visits, and visits to cultural institutions), which confirms their complex motivation for visiting the city (Brida et al., 2012; Brida et al., 2014). Visitors from Croatia, who come more often than average for other motives (e.g. VFR) or as day-trippers, are more interested in the Christmas Market itself, but still use the same services (e.g. restaurants, bars, etc.). Therefore, Advent in Zagreb encourages participation in other cultural and entertainment activities (Sharon, 2013) in the city that are not primarily focused on tourists (Edwards, 2008; Ashworth & Page, 2011).

Few visitors from both groups participate in organized excursions, which is due to the short average length of stay, the predominance of individual organization of the visit and the fact that nearby attractions and destinations (e.g. the Medvednica Mountains, Samobor...) can be easily visited individually by car (the main means of transport for all visitors). The low attendance at sporting events in both groups is largely related to the period in which the survey took place, when there were few of them to attract a larger audience. The *Snow Queen Trophy* on Mount

Medvednica, the biggest sporting event in the holiday period fails to attract more visitors to Zagreb, although it would be a real opportunity to combine the two attractions in a more successful tourism package.

Conclusion

Research revealed that the *Advent in Zagreb* experienced immense growth from 2010 to 2019, expanding from 3 to 30 new locations in the city, followed by a rapid increase in tourist arrivals and overnight stays, but it remained mostly confined to the narrow central zone where it overlapped other tourist attractions. The growing importance of the event in urban tourism can be seen in a growing share of tourism in the winter period. Visitor motivation confirmed that event tourism is combined with cultural tourism and visiting friends and relatives, while same-day visitors focus mainly on the event. The majority of tourists, despite their short stay in the city, participate in many activities related to *Advent in Zagreb*, as well as other cultural and entertainment activities outside the event.

The research identified two main groups of visitors. The first group consists of visitors from Croatia, who can be divided into two sub-groups – day trippers, whose main motivation

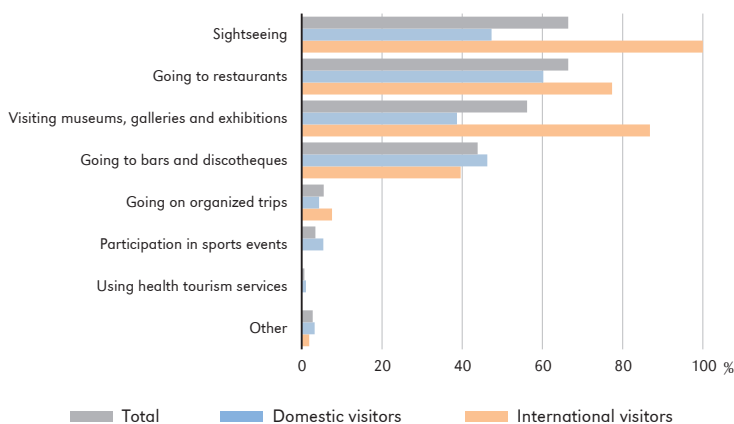


Figure 7. Participation of respondents in activities outside the Advent in Zagreb (share of all, domestic and international visitors that participated in each activity)

is *Advent* and who visit most *Advent* sites, and overnight tourists with a longer average length of stay, who are mainly motivated by VFR and attend some sites. The second group consists mainly of international visitors with a complex motivation. They visit fewer *Advent* sites, but consume more of the city's other tourism supply.

The research findings have a potentially broader impact, as they can be compared with other urban destinations that rely largely on events. Similar research can be conducted in other cities of similar size and structure of tourism, particularly with Christmas markets as the main tourist attraction and central element of image in the market.

This study presents some limitations. The timing of the survey may have influenced the results in that the proportion of international tourists who visited Zagreb in the first three weeks of December and had the Christ-

mas Market as their primary or secondary motive may have been lower. Moreover, the research revealed that a significant proportion of visitors to *Advent in Zagreb* fall into the VFR group, whose motivation is slightly different from that of other visitor groups, but both groups consume the tourism supply in Zagreb. Therefore, the next step could be to study the motivation and activities of different tourist groups in Zagreb throughout the year, including outside the period of the Christmas Market. Another possible research could include an investigation of the impact of the event on the city and the local population and their perception of the event.

Editors' note:

Unless otherwise stated, the sources of tables and figures are the authors', on the basis of their own research.

References

- Almeida-Santana, A., Moreno-Gil, S. (2018). Understanding tourism loyalty: Horizontal vs. destination loyalty. *Tourism Management*, 65, 245-255. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.10.011>
- Asworth, G.J., Page, S.J. (2011). Urban tourism research: Recent progress and current paradoxes. *Tourism Management*, 32(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.02.002>
- Brida, J.G., Disegna, M., Osti, L. (2012). Segmenting visitors of cultural events by motivation: A sequential non-linear clustering analysis of Italian Christmas Market visitors. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 39, 11349-11356. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2012.03.041>
- Brida, J.G., Disegna, M., Scuderi, R. (2014). Segmenting visitors of cultural events: The case of Christmas Market. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 41, 4542-4553. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2014.01.019>
- Brida, J.G., Meleddu, M., Tokarchuk, O. (2017). Use value of cultural events: The case of the Christmas markets. *Tourism Management*, 59, 67-75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.07.012>
- Broeckerhoff, A., Galalae, C. (2020). Christmas markets – marketplace icon. *Consumption Markets & Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2020.1803845>
- Casteran, H., Roederer, C. (2013). Does authenticity really affect behavior? The case of the Strasbourg Christmas Market. *Tourism Management*, 36, 153-163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.11.012>
- City of Zagreb (2021). *Tourism Statistics*. [19 May 2021] <https://www.zagreb.hr/turisticki-pokazatelj-i-smjestajni-kapaciteti/1031>.
- Cohen, E.H. (2003). Images of Israel – A structural comparison along gender, ethnic, denominational and national lines. *Tourist Studies*, 3, 253-280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797603049659>
- Connell, J., Page, S. (2009). *Event tourism: Critical concepts in tourism*. London: Routledge.

- Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (2011-2020). *Statistical Reports – Tourism in 2010-2019*. [19 May 2021] www.dzs.hr.
- CRR Research (2014). *Christmas markets: 2014 review*. [15 April 2018] <http://www.retailresearch.org/christmasmarkets.php>.
- Delaplace, M., Gautherat, E., Kebir, L. (2020). The copresence of tourists and residents as central to the resilience of urban tourism. An analysis of the Champs Elysées Christmas Market based on survey and mobile phone data. *Études caribéennes*, 15691. <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudescaribeennes.15691>
- Dickinson, J., Jones, I., Leask, A. (2007). Event tourism enhancing destinations and the visitor economy. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 9(5), 301-302. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.642>
- Dumbrovská, V., Fialová, D. (2014). Tourist intensity in capital cities in Central Europe: Comparative analysis of tourism in Prague, Vienna and Budapest. *Czech Journal of Tourism*, 3(1), 5-26. <https://doi.org/10.2478/cjot-2014-0001>
- Edwards, D., Griffin, T., Hayllar, B. (2008). Urban tourism research – Developing an agenda. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(4), 1032-1052. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.09.002>
- Egresi, I.O., Răcășan, B.S., Dezzi, S., Ilieș, M., Ilieș, G. (2021). Christmas markets in city centers: how do they impact local residents and businesses?. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 7(2), 391-409.
- Fredline, L., Jago, L., Deery, M. (2003). The development of a generic scale to measure the social impacts of events. *Event Management*, 8(1), 23-37. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599503108751676>
- Gammon, W., Holocek, D. (1983). Economic impact of an annual tourism industry exposition. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10, 199-212. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(83\)90026-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(83)90026-9)
- Getz, D., Page, S. (2015). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 52, 593-631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.03.007>
- Getz, D. (1990). *Festivals, special events, and tourism*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.
- Getz, D. (1997). *Event management & event tourism*. New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, 29, 403-428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.07.017>
- Getz, D. (2012). Event studies discourses and future directions. *Event Management*, 16(2), 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599512X13343565268456>
- Getz, D., Page, S.J. (2007). *Event Studies*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315708027>
- Glasson, J. (1994). Oxford: A heritage city under pressure. Visitors, impacts and management responses. *Tourism Management*, 15(2), 137-144. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(94\)90007-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(94)90007-8)
- Goldblatt, J. (2001). *The international dictionary of event management (2nd ed.)*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hall, M. (1992). *Hallmark tourist events: Impacts, management and planning*. London: Belhaven.
- Hall, M., Lew, A., Williams, A. (2004). *A companion to tourism*. New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470752272>
- Hrvatski leksikon (2019). *Definicija festivala*. [31 August 2019] <https://www.hrleksikon.info/definicija/festival.html>.
- Institute for Tourism Zagreb (2012). *Tomas istraživanja 2012: Stavovi i potrošnja turista i posjetitelja Zagreba*. [14 January 2018] <http://www.infozagreb.hr/docs/b2b/2012%20Tomas%20Zagreb.pdf>
- Jovanović, V., Deliđ, U. (2010). *Karakteristike manifestacija i njihov utjecaj na razvoj turizma u Srbiji*. Beograd: Singidunum revija.
- Laing, J. (2017). Festival and event tourism research: Current and future perspectives. *Tourism Management*, 25, 165-168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.11.024>
- Law, M.C. (1996). *Tourism in major cities*. London: International Thomson Business Press.

- Lončarić, D., Cegur Radović, T., Skendrović, P. (2020). Who attends Christmas Markets and why? Analysis of visitor structure and motivation for attending two Christmas Markets in Croatia. *Ekonomski vjesnik / Econviews*, 33(1), 101-114.
- Marcouiller, D. (1997). Toward integrative tourism planning in rural America. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 11(3), 337-358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/088541229701100306>
- Marković, S., Raspor Janković, S., Racz, A., Mitrović, S. (2018). Empirical validation of demographic characteristics' role in visitor experience: The case of Zagreb Christmas Market. *Tourism & Hospitality Industry 2018, Congress Proceedings*, 230-245.
- Moscardo, G., Pearce, P., Morrison, A., Green, D., O'Leary, J.T. (2000). Developing a typology for understanding visiting friends and relatives Markets. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 251-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003800307>
- Page, S. (1995). *Urban tourism*. London: Routledge.
- Richards, G. (2001). *Cultural attractions and European tourism*. Oxon: CABI Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851994406.0000>
- Richards, G., Wilson, J. (2004). The impact of cultural events on city image: Rotterdam cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies*, 41(10), 1931-1951. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000256323>
- Ritchie, J.R.B. (1984). Assessing the impacts of hallmark events: Conceptual and research issues. *Journal of Travel Research*, 23(1), 2-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728758402300101>
- Ritchie, J.R.B., Beliveau, D. (1974). Hallmark events: An evaluation of a strategic response to seasonality in the travel market. *Journal of Travel Research*, 13(2), 14-20.
- Roberson, D.N. (2008). Tourists perceptions of capital cities: The case study of Zagreb, Croatia. *Tourism*, 56(1), 93-101.
- Russo, A.P. (2002). Planning considerations for cultural tourism: A case study of four European cities. *Tourism Management*, 23, 631-637. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(02\)00027-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(02)00027-4)
- Sharon, B.D., Noga, C.K., Arza, C. (2013). Evaluation of an urban tourism destination. *Tourism Geographies*, 15(2), 233-249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2011.647329>
- Soutar, G., McLeod, P. (1993). Residents' perceptions on impact of the America's Cup. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20(3), 571-582. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(93\)90010-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(93)90010-Z)
- Syme, G., Shaw, B., Fenton, D., Mueller, W. (1989). *The planning and evaluation of hallmark events*. Gower: Aldershot.
- Tourist Board of Zagreb (TBZ) (2018). *Interview with Ivana Mahnić, professional in the Department of Product Development of the Tourist Board of Zagreb*. Zagreb.
- Van Den Berg, L., Van Der Borg, J., Van Der Meer, J. (1995). *Urban Tourism - Performance and Strategies in Eight European Cities*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Westcott, M., Anderson, W. (Eds.) (2020). *Introduction to Tourism and Hospitality in BC - 2nd Edition*. Victoria BC: BCcampus.
- Youell, R. (1998). *Tourism - An Introduction*. Harlow: Longman.