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# Perspectives of cruise tourism in the City of Rijeka

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose** – This article discusses a type of activity, level of consumption, and cruise ship tourists' satisfaction in a destination to understand the perspectives of cruise tourism in the city. **Design/Methodology** – The research was conducted during 2018 by personal interviews or website questionnaires among 163 cruise tourists in the city of Rijeka, Croatia. The survey included 15 questions that were categorized into five thematic units. The data were processed by descriptive statistics. **Findings** – According to a slight increase in travelers' consumption but also their overall satisfaction, the results suggest an increase in destination attractiveness. The economic results are still at a modest level. A set of measures has been proposed to improve tourism services in the destination. **Originality of the research** – Given those cruise companies are permanently on the lookout for attractive destinations, it is up to cities to attract cruise ships to their ports. It is necessary to assess and check the tourists' experience of a cruise destination permanently so that the offerings of port city can be adjusted to the changing demands of passengers. Limiting factors associated with cruising point to caution in assessing the future of cruise tourism, especially in a city where this kind of business is just beginning.

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## 1 Introduction

Cruise tourism is a complex economic activity that has many implications for society as a whole. It represents a combined connection of elements and features of many different activities including traffic, tourism, and entertainment. It unites all of the elements of maritime transport in terms of passenger transport, and it also has all of the features of tourism activities in terms of safety, luxury, entertainment, and educational stay of the cruise passengers (Diakomihalis et al., 2009).

The cruise industry is based on the sale of an itinerary and not the destination itself, which places importance on selecting a range of ports of call covered by a single trip. Cruise companies have to meet the challenge of developing competitive cruise packages while optimizing the employment of their fleet of ships because this will minimize operating costs and/or maximize total revenue per passenger on board. In doing so, they must consider the

circumstances and requirements prevailing in the tourism market, such as the seasonality of demand, the optimal duration of travel, a balance between navigation time and port time, available time in port for trips and sightseeing at tourist destinations, and also overall cruise guest satisfaction (Rodrigue and Notteboom, 2013).

Cruise tourism is also a revenue generator for the industries that are directly involved in providing services to this tourism sector. Apart from the cruise companies themselves, the port cities where cruise ships operate, travel agencies, and all of the other logistical activities are included in cruise ship supply chains. Cruise tourism is also a revenue generator for locations that are included in organized day trips and for economic activities related to the consumption by cruise tourists during their stay at these destinations. Therefore, port cities and related destinations enjoy the benefits derived from the three main sources of spending, namely: cruise companies, passengers, and cruise ship crews. The direct expenditures of

each of these revenue sources represent some of the positive impacts that cruises can have on the cities that are involved in cruise itineraries (Pallis, 2015).

The cruise tourism at the Croatian coast of the Adriatic, which is the third- largest in the Mediterranean, is partially based on the development of ports for reception of cruise ships (Luković, 2008). The city of Rijeka in Croatia has recently been included on the cruise map. However, despite extensive experience in stay-over tourism, Rijeka lacks previous experience of the cruise industry and the initial results have been modest. This paper aims to examine the perspectives of this type of business for the city of Rijeka based on the economic effects to date and on the level of satisfaction of travelers who have visited this destination.

This paper is organized into six chapters. The introductory part outlines the basic features of cruise tourism and it describes the positive impact on all of the participants involved in cruise travel activities. The second chapter will review the available literature on the topic of cruise tourism. The third chapter describes with research methodology. In the fourth chapter, the results of the survey conducted among cruise tourists who visited the Port of Rijeka during 2018 are shown. Based on the collected data, an analysis of their activities was made, the level of consumption was calculated, and the overall satisfaction of cruise tourists during their stay at the observed destination was processed. The final chapter concludes the study and confirms that when appropriate tools are implemented in a detailed analysis of cruise tourist consumer needs and their satisfaction in a destination, the results that are obtained may provide suitable guidelines for cities that wish to implement their own development projects to attract cruise guests.

## 2 Literature review

The increasing number of cruise tourists and the increasing presence of cruise travel in tourist offerings are both reflected in the growing interest of the topic of cruise tourism in the literature. Therefore, this section will review the relevant literature, which will form the basis of the framework guidelines.

Papathanassis and Beckmann (2011) analyzed 145 scientific papers on the subject of cruise tourism over the period from 1983 to 2009 and concluded that the number of published papers has grown exponentially over the years. They also recognize that cruises follow the social tradition of tourism, and they add that the managerial and business aspects of cruises are not sufficiently explored. Also, they note that the involvement of the research community in the systematic analysis of this topic significantly improves its reliability and integrity.

Chen et al. (2019) explore the direct economic impact that cruise ships can have on the local community of port cities. The results of their survey confirm the relationship

between the positive economic impacts and the number of passengers and crew on the trip, the total number of cruises, as well as mediation effects on expenditures per passenger and expenditures per crew member in port destinations. The economic importance of cruise tourism has been also explored by Gouveia and Eusebio (2019), using the port of Funchal on the island of Madeira as an example. This paper presents a methodology to estimate the total expenditures made by cruise tourism in the ports involved in cruise travel. Using a combination of methods, they estimate the total cost incurred by cruise passengers, crew members, and cruise companies. However, their research findings reveal that although cruises play an important role in the tourist development of a destination, the economic added value to the local community is not satisfactory. Consequently, new strategies need to be adopted to increase the contribution to the economic development of cruise destinations.

Satisfaction in the tourist destination had been classically explained with the so-called, one-factor theory, according to which tourists are either satisfied or dissatisfied as two sides of the same coin. For example, according to the two-factor theory, tourists can be both satisfied and dissatisfied (Maddox, 1981). Herzberg et al. (1959) subdivided travelers' needs into basic or hygienic factors, which must be fulfilled to avoid dissatisfaction, and growth or motivation factors whose degree of fulfillment increases satisfaction, especially if exceeds their expectations.

Alegre and Garau (2011) distinguish between satisfactory, unsatisfactory, and hybrid factors in the rating of tourist satisfaction. The degree of satisfaction largely depends on previous expectations, which may be realistic or unrealistic. On-line surveys of tourists' experiences and ratings of tourist destinations greatly contribute to reality in expectations and thus contribute to passenger satisfaction (Chatterjee, 2001). For cruise tourists, Ward (2000) defines passenger satisfaction with the degree of qualitative fulfillment of the following five basic attributes: ship, accommodation, kitchen, service, and overall experience. The destination was not considered as a factor of satisfaction. For example, Baker (2014) finds that cruise tourists in the Caribbean have given the highest satisfaction rating to the unpolluted environment and sunny sandy beaches, pointing to subjectivism and changing trends.

Based on information from cruise passengers visiting Mediterranean ports, Sanz-Blas et al. (2019) use the least-squares method to investigate how traveler satisfaction affects their future behavior. Based on the data collected about the passengers' gender, age, education, and experience, they conclude that this information has a direct impact on creating overall traveler satisfaction, acting on the general picture of the destinations visited, and influencing their future behavior.

Cusano et al. (2017) investigate the role and influence of port cities in defining the organization of cruises. Based on the information from cruise companies operating in the Mediterranean, they explore the role of a port city in the

formation of a cruise itinerary. They conclude that there is a certain hierarchy between ports visited by cruise ships, while some ports have a central and irreplaceable role; most ports have a secondary role that is subject to change. Also, they emphasize that organized excursion packages have a positive effect on the inclusion of an individual port on an organized cruise.

Jugmonah and Giampiccoli (2015) propose three possible collaboration forms between cruise and community-based tourism including a short-term excursion in the destination while the ship is at berth, the cruise tours before or after some longer time spending in the destination, and commercial activities onboard presenting the features of the destination.

In summary, although most authors explore different aspects of cruise tourism, only a small number of papers address the topic of developing a port city strategy to attract cruise tourism. Consequently, the analysis carried out for this paper will focus on cruise tourists' activities to improve the supply of port cities, with the ultimate goal of positively influencing the economy of the local community.

### 3 Research methodology

The research methodology comprises a survey of cruise passengers who visited the Port of Rijeka during 2018, either in the form of a personal interview or a questionnaire that was made available on a custom-designed website. During 2018, 11 cruise ships (Table 1) with 10,913 passengers sailed to the Port of Rijeka, of which 163 were surveyed.

The survey included 15 questions, which were categorized into five thematic units. The units specifically dealt with the topics of the passengers' personal information, their activity at the destination, total consumption, satisfaction with certain elements of the offer at the

destination, general passenger satisfaction, and the recommendation of the city of Rijeka as a tourist destination to friends and acquaintances. The data were processed by descriptive statistics. The satisfaction answers were rated by a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5 (1 – Very satisfied, 2 – Moderately satisfied, 3 – Dissatisfied, 4 – Very dissatisfied, 5 – Don't know).

## 4 Research results

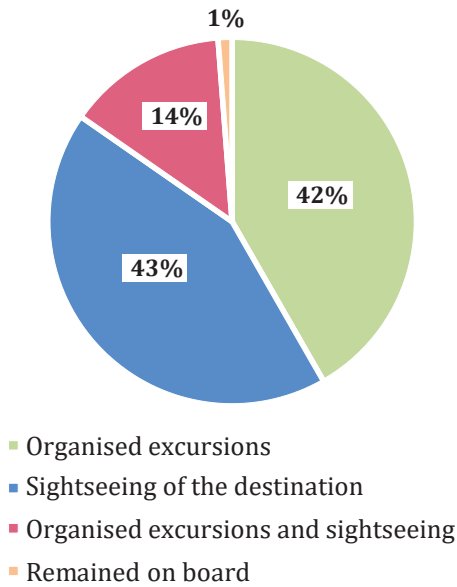
The results of the study are divided into three inter-related units. The first section focuses on determining the type of activity that the passengers undertook at the destination. The second section analyzes the level of consumption and the third one addresses the passengers' level of satisfaction with elements of the overall offerings at the destination. The final results and conclusions should help to meet the interests and expectations of cruise companies, port and city authorities, and other stakeholders if they wish to continue in developing of cruise tourism in the port city.

### 4.1 Cruise ship passenger activities at the destination

Because most tourists perceive the cruise ship as their primary destination while cruising, the ports of call become secondary destinations. Therefore, the activity of passengers is determined by the time that they spend outside their mother ship and what they are occupied with during that period. Cruisers, as a rule, only stay for a few hours in each destination. Consequently, only certain proportions of passengers get off the ship and temporarily stay on land. Time constraints affect the type of activity that travelers can occupy themselves in the ports of call; hence, in addition to organized excursions travelers have the choice of sightseeing. An examination of the travelers'

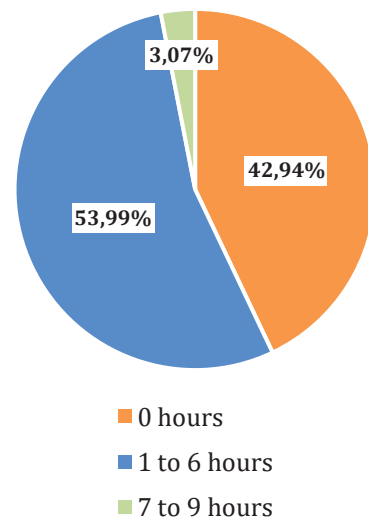
**Table 1** Cruise ships that docked at the port of Rijeka during 2018

No.	Arrival Date	Ship Name	Number of Passengers
1	26.3.2018	AIDAaura	1,311
2	31.3.2018	AIDAaura	1,329
3	17.4.2018	BERLIN	375
4	31.5.2018	SEABOURN ANCHOR	552
5	13.6.2018	THE WORLD	263
6	4.7.2018	ORIANA	1,782
7	16.8.2018	RIVIERA	1,263
8	22.9.2018	AZAMARA QUEST	685
9	14.10.2018	QUEEN VICTORIA	2,040
10	15.10.2018	SEVEN STARS EXPLORER	742
11	1.11.2018	SEABOURN OVATION	571
<b>Total</b>			<b>10,913</b>



**Chart 1** Types of passenger activities at the destination

Source: Prepared by the Author according to the survey results, 2019

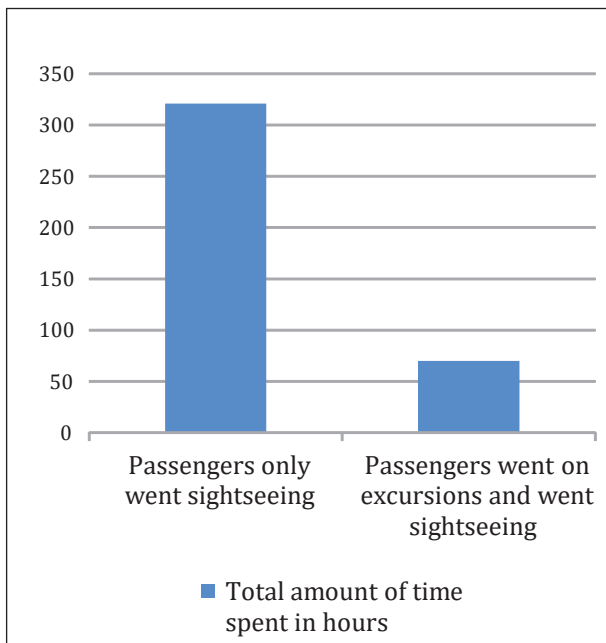


**Chart 2** Time spent exploring the city

Source: Prepared by the Author according to the survey results, 2019

activities at a destination is important to more precisely determine which activities are important in economic terms, or on what occasion exactly travelers express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Chart 1 shows the activities of the surveyed passengers.

According to Chart 1, the largest share of the passengers surveyed (i.e., 42.94%) spent their available time sightseeing. A share of 41.72% took the opportunity to go on organized excursions, while 14.11% of the passengers went on organized excursions in addition to spending some time sightseeing. Only 1.23% of the passengers remained on board the cruise ship and were not interested in learning about the city or the surrounding area.



**Chart 3** Total amount of time the passengers spent sightseeing in the city

Source: Prepared by the Author according to the survey results, 2019

In addition to analyzing the type of activity that the travelers at the destination engaged in, it is of utmost importance to determine the total amount of time spent on the city tour given that the consumer activity of travelers takes place during this period. Therefore, Charts 2 and 3 show the statistics of the total time spent by travelers exploring the city.

Chart 2 shows that 53.99% of the passengers who chose to visit the city spent 1 to 6 hours in these activities, while 42.94% of the surveyed travelers decided not to go to the city. Only 3.07% of travelers spent 7 to 9 hours visiting the city.

The total amount of time spent by the surveyed travelers sightseeing and exploring the city, according to Chart 3, is 391 hours. Of these, the passengers who only went sightseeing spent an average of 4 hours and 35 minutes in the city. In contrast, the passengers who went on organized excursions spent only part of their time in the city sightseeing, averaging at 3 hours and 2 minutes spent in the city. However, the overall average time spent by all travelers who went sightseeing in the city, which is 57.06% of the total number of passengers, is 4 hours and 12 minutes.

**Table 2** Consumption of cruise passengers per destination organized by category of service and product

Type of service or product	Total Expenditure (€)	Share of Total Consumption (%)	Average Expenditure per Respondent (€)
Refreshing drinks	331.00	6.08	2.03
Souvenirs	224.00	4.11	1.37
Postcards	14.00	0.26	0.09
Local food and alcoholic beverages	1,786.00	32.78	10.96
Clothes and fashion accessories	1,488.00	27.31	9.13
Organized excursions	1,180.00	21.66	7.24
Entertainment content	10.00	0.18	0.06
Local transportation (taxi, bicycles, etc)	305.00	5.60	1.87
Museum Entrance	35.00	0.64	0.21
Other	75.00	1.38	0.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,448.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>33.42</b>

Source: Prepared by the Author according to the survey results, 2019

**Table 3** Consumption of tourists in other Adriatic cruise destinations (transit ports)

Destination	Year	Consumption (€)
Venice (ITA)	2012	171.5
Koper (SLO)	2014	56.7
Rovinj (CRO)	2014	33.7
Zadar (CRO)	2006	55
Split (CRO)	2019	54.1
Dubrovnik (CRO)	2018	58
Kotor (MNE)	2011	43

Source: Jugović et al, 2017; Vidan et al, 2019; HrTurizam, 2020

#### 4.2 Consumption of cruise passengers at the destination

The consumption of tourists at the destination, directly and indirectly, stimulates the development of various economic activities and therefore has a positive economic impact on the local community. The possibility of valorizing natural, social, and economic resources through cruise tourism is a challenge for all port cities who wish to participate in cruise tourism. Table 2 gives the details of the level and type of consumption of cruise passengers at the destination. The total consumption of the surveyed passengers, according to Table 2, who visited the Port of Rijeka in 2018, was €5,448.00. The highest sums spent were in the categories of domestic food and alcoholic beverages (i.e., € 1,786.00), followed by clothing and fashion accessories (i.e., € 1,488.00), and organized excursions (i.e., € 1,180.00). The remaining consumption categories totaled €994.00 and accounted for 18.25% of the total consumption of the passengers surveyed.

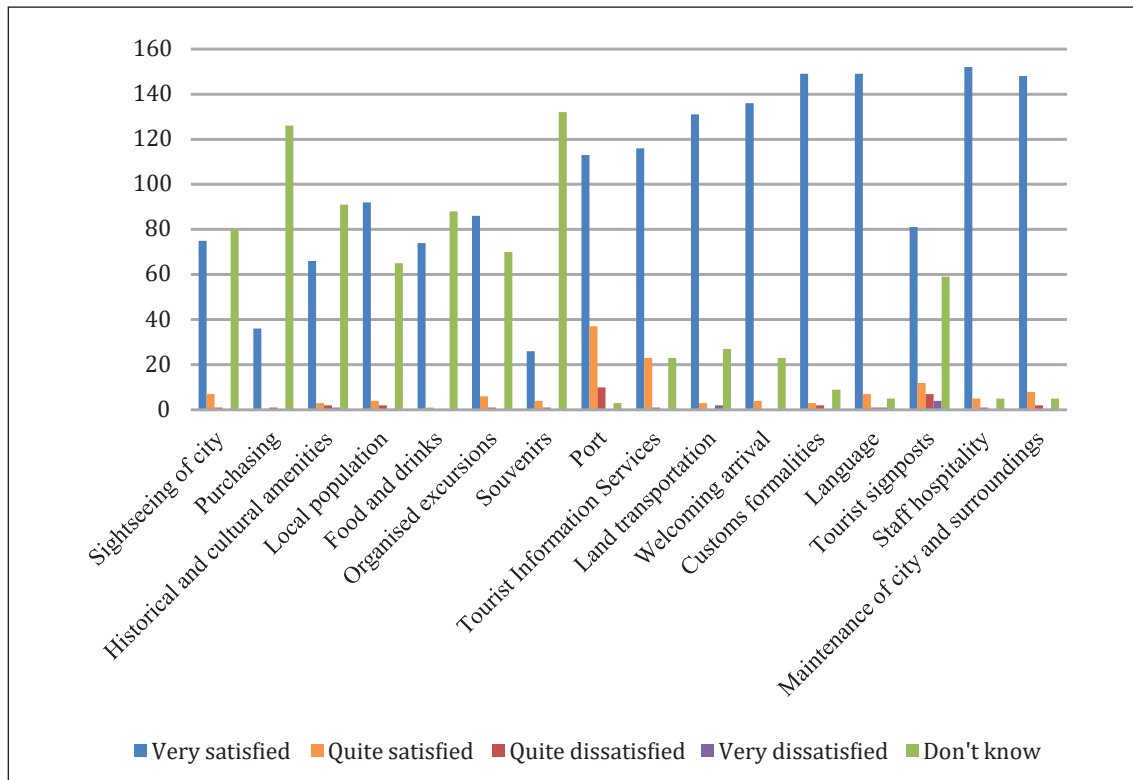
The average consumption per destination per respondent was €33.42. According to the consumption of cruise tourists, the city of Rijeka lags behind other established,

and especially, branded destinations in the Adriatic (see Table 3).

Considering the total number of 10,913 passengers who visited Rijeka port on cruise lines during 2018, and the participation of 98.77% of passengers in consumer activities as well as the average consumption, the amount of €360,226.50 was extrapolated as the cruise tourism economic contribution to the destination.

#### 4.3 Satisfaction of cruise passengers with the destination

The overall satisfaction of the cruise passengers with their destination is an extremely important factor for cruise companies as well as cities that have become the cruise itineraries. Cruise companies with high passenger satisfaction equal a positive recommendation for attracting new travel users, which means for the cities more traffic of cruise ships and better revenue from cruise tourism. Chart 4 shows the level of passenger satisfaction concerning the various categories of services and products, following the data collected from the survey.



**Chart 4** Passenger satisfaction with the categories of services and products at the destination

**Source:** Prepared by the Author according to the survey results, 2019

The level of passenger satisfaction for certain categories of services and products can generally be divided into two groups of answers, according to Chart 4. One group is characterized by a high percentage of responses, in which passengers declare that they do not know whether they are satisfied, which can be attributed to the lack of direct contact with a particular service or product, such as souvenirs, shopping, historical and cultural amenities, food and drink, and sightseeing. The second group is characterized by a high percentage of responses in which travelers are very satisfied.

## 5 Discussion

The results of the research regarding the activities of travelers indicate that 42.94% spent their available time in the city sightseeing and exploring the destination, 41.72% chose only organized excursions, 14.11% went sightseeing after completing organized excursions, while only 1.23% of the surveyed passengers remained onboard the cruise ship. The average time travelers spent sightseeing and exploring the city was 4 hours and 12 minutes.

The level of consumption of the 163 surveyed passengers at the destination was €5,448.00. The highest consumption was recorded in the categories of local food and alcoholic beverages (i.e., €1,786.00), clothing and accessories (i.e., €1,488.00), and organized excursions (i.e.,

€1,180.00). The average consumption per passenger amounted to €33.42, which through extrapolation brings the total consumption of €360,226.50, based on the total number of passengers who visited the Port of Rijeka during 2018 and decided to leave the ship. Compared to 2015, this represents an increase in spending by €9.26 per passenger (Jugović et al., 2015). Apart from the fact that 99% of tourists got off the ship, this increase can be explained by better organization and marketing in Rijeka, as well as tourist satisfaction with the destination.

The Cruise Passenger Satisfaction Survey has shown that passengers are very satisfied with the hospitality of the staff, customs formalities, language and maintenance of the city, and the surrounding area. However, they are not satisfied with the port and tourist signposts, perhaps primarily because some of the ships were moored at the container terminal because the existing dock for cruise ships cannot accommodate the larger draft vessels. Also, a large number of travelers did not know how to rate their satisfaction with souvenirs, shopping, historically cultural amenities, and food and drink because they had not been in direct contact with the said product and service offered. Satisfaction is a subjective category and research results are sometimes unexpected. This is the reason why every testing of tourists is useful to assess their expectations as realistically as possible. Taking these results into consideration, the need for improving and enabling a greater level of

accessibility in individual categories of products and services has been shown, even though the overall level of passenger satisfaction has been assessed to be relatively good.

Economic effects on the local community and tourist satisfaction are important indicators of the perspective of the cruise tourism industry in a particular destination. The global demand for cruise tourism is growing and the burden is on local communities to attract as many users as possible. Brešković and Novaković (2002) believe that the cruise business can become a driving force for the tourist destination if the economic operators and the local community adapt the overall offer to this part of the market on time. The positive effects of cruise tourism include the increase of the number of jobs, opportunities to generate additional income, increase in social standards, decrease in the level of emigration of the local population, increase in the level of gross domestic product, the degree of equipping of ports and cities with communal and other infrastructures and other socio-economic values, both on local and on national levels (Perić and Oršulić, 2011). All income and effects of marine cruises to the economy of a destination are observed through various economic data and their influence on GDP, employment, increase of salaries, and other features of the working-age population. Direct effects created by tourists at a destination influence employment and salaries in the sector providing goods and services. Direct jobs created, generate spending and income in other sectors of goods and services, consequently creating new jobs once again. (Benić, 2011) These are reasons why generally, residents have a positive attitude towards the development of cruise tourism in their ports, but they are also aware of its negative impacts (Brida et al., 2012). Lopes and Dredge (2018) suggest a better understanding of the value generated from cruise tourism shore excursion, pointing out that economic value is not only one and there are other values, positive and negative, which managers and local authorities have to count on.

In the beginning, it is particularly important to invest in port infrastructure and maintenance services, without which the cruise business cannot be imagined (Brida and Aguirre, 2008). Besides, in this type of tourism, there is an ongoing competition between cruise companies and tourism professionals in destinations visited by cruise ships in terms of the share of cruise tourists' consumption. Many cruise ships now have such large and varied offers that tourists in the destination often choose to stay on board or, if they get off, they are not motivated for consumption (Clancy, 2008). It is a good result for the city of Rijeka that only 1% of passengers remained on board, which proves that these cruise companies are not too demanding. City tours or out-of-town trips are often organized by the cruise companies themselves. These trips need to be well prepared, accurate, and organized to provide the destination tour more affordable than one provided by the liner. That is one of the reasons why Wilkinson (1999) and Seidl et al. (2006) suggest that the income from cruise tourism is always lower than estimated and that the economic

impact of cruise tourism is modest compared to classical tourism.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the passengers in maritime cruises spend 30% less than stationary guests, providing each destination the chance to improve its tourist offer (Šerić and Režić, 2014). Larsen and Wolf (2016) show some psychological differences between cruise ship tourists and community-based ones. The cruise ship tourists come back to the same destination less frequently, do not spend more if the opportunities are larger, and do not recommend the destination more than community-based tourists. From the profitability point of view, Dwyer and Forsyth (1998) give very little importance to cruise tourism, which is reflected only through increased employment in the industry, payment of dues and fees, and provision of the ship supplies; in other words, through actions that are not directly connected to the consumption of cruise tourists in the destination. This assumes that there are no externalities or taxes (Dwyer and Forsyth, 1998; Carić, 2010). MacNeill and Wozniak (2018) found negative indices on the cruise tourism profitability and benefits for the local community. There was too little evidence on the employment increases as well as larger income, but the supply in destination became worse and corruption increased. These possibilities need also to be considered. According to the high cost of sustainable development of cruise destinations, Brida and Zapata-Aguirre (2009) wonder if we are sure that the benefits of cruise tourism surpass the costs? The impact of cruise tourism on the environment can be significant and, given to the growing of the sector, it will probably be even higher in the future, especially in the Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea (Carić and Mackelworth, 2014). Presented and positive measures, undertaken by the industry, had usually been late (Johnson, 2002). For all this, Gouveia and Eusebio (2019) advocate an integrated approach to studying the benefits of cruise tourism and emphasize the particular need for cooperation of all local stakeholders, business transparency, and availability of all relevant data. Cruise tourism promotes economic activity, but more often it brings with it a net cost rather than a net benefit (Chase and McKee, 2003). Therefore, any measures must be well thought out and planned.

Income and satisfaction can be improved by increasing the number of passengers using organized excursion services, making them more interesting and attractive, making the offer of domestic products more accessible, improving the port infrastructure, marking the local sights more comprehensively, and attracting tourists within the limited time available. The implementation of these guidelines will improve the overall offerings of the city, and therefore will have a greater positive impact on the economy, on the local community, and attract more cruise ships. To implement an even greater level of monitoring of cruise tourists' requests for future research, it is suggested that an extended survey be conducted to ask what travelers expect from a particular destination, and what would make them return or recommend the destination.



## 6 Conclusion

The cruise tourism business is very sensitive and the final profit for a destination is uncertain. It is necessary to constantly assess and check the tourist experience of a cruise destination so that the offerings of port cities can be adjusted to the changing demands of the passengers. The city of Rijeka still shows modest economic results in the cruise business, but it also shows a positive trend and satisfied guests. These indicators point to a good future for this type of tourism if the local community retains interest after calculating all of the limiting factors connected with cruise tourism, particularly the cost-effectiveness of cruise tourism and external costs.

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