

Chapter 5

Project ArchaeoCulTour: Innovative Valorization of Archaeological Heritage in Istria County Through Sustainable Cultural and Creative Tourism



Kristina Afrić Rakitovac, Nataša Urošević and Nikola Vojnović

Abstract The paper will present the conceptual and analytical framework for the research on the development potential of archaeological heritage in Istria County, Croatia, through sustainable tourism. Starting from the comparative analysis of the European as well as regional and national best practice in valorization of this specific category of heritage, the authors will propose the innovative research methodology and the most appropriate models of sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage, such as the eco-archaeological parks, open-air museums and interpretation centers, living history programs, cultural routes and educational paths, as well as community digs and practical workshops as models of participatory heritage management which would involve the local community too. The research included a hybrid methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods and interviews with all interested stakeholders (local community, visitors, experts). The main aim of the research, conducted in the framework of the project ArchaeoCulTour (The Archaeological Landscape in Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism in Vrsar Municipality), was to develop a successful innovative strategy for sustainable cultural tourism growth in the most developed Croatian tourist region, Istria, characterized by abundance of archaeological sites, which are unfortunately still not adequately valorized, presented and interpreted. The preliminary analyses indicated the lack of comparative thinking in this area as well as the need to use and promote the European best practice in development of sustainable cultural tourism destinations, proposing the models to present the regional archaeological treasure in the most proper way.

Keywords Archaeology · Cultural heritage · Sustainable tourism · Istria

JEL Classification Z10 · Z32

K. Afrić Rakitovac (✉) · N. Urošević · N. Vojnović
Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Preradovićeva, Pula, Croatia
e-mail: kafric@unipu.hr

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019
V. Katsoni and M. Segarra-Oña (eds.), *Smart Tourism as a Driver for Culture and Sustainability*, Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03910-3_5

1 Introduction

In this paper the preliminary results of the research conducted in the framework of the recent project ArchaeoCulTour (The Archaeological Landscape in Sustainable Development of Cultural Tourism in Vrsar Municipality) will be presented. The main aim of the research was to develop a successful innovative strategy for sustainable cultural tourism growth in the most developed Croatian tourist region, Istria, characterized by abundance of archaeological sites, which are unfortunately still not adequately valorized, presented and interpreted. The analysis was aligned with the key objectives of the ArchaeoCulTour project: to investigate archaeological sites with potential for tourist presentation and merge archaeological heritage data into a comprehensive database, which results could be applied for development of thematic maps related to the tourist presentation; systematic monitoring to preserve the heritage; increasing visibility and expanding knowledge of the importance of archaeological sites in the local community with the purpose of its appropriate valorization.

Starting from the comparative analysis of the European as well as regional and national best practice in valorization of this specific category of heritage, the authors proposed the innovative research methodology, which included a hybrid methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods and interviews with all interested stakeholders (local community, visitors, experts). The authors have tested the key hypotheses on the local case study—elaborating potentials for valorization of archaeological heritage in the Municipality of Vrsar in Western Istria, which represents a typical coastal tourist destination in Croatia and on the Mediterranean, characterized by mass tourism and a remarkable seasonality: H1: mass tourism and high seasonality are still predominant models in Croatian tourism; H2: the most important Croatian tourist region, Istria, has a great potential for development of cultural and creative tourism as sustainable alternatives to mass tourism; H3: cultural and creative tourism could diversify demand in space and time; H4: cultural and creative tourism could involve local community in heritage preservation; H5: archaeological heritage in Istria could be more adequately valorized, presented and interpreted through sustainable cultural and creative tourism; H6: the proper models of archaeological heritage management could help to sustainable development of tourism and the local community in the Municipality of Vrsar too.

Bearing in mind the local community commitment to sustainable and inclusive development, the authors explored potentials of cultural and creative tourism, which included the most appropriate models of sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage, such as the eco-archaeological parks, open-air museums and interpretation centers, living history programs, cultural routes and educational paths, as well as community digs and practical workshops as models of participatory heritage management which would involve the local community too (Afrić Rakitovac and Urošević, 2017).

2 Conceptual Framework—Literature Review

Since the preliminary analyses indicated the lack of comparative thinking in this area as well as the need to use and promote the European best practice in development of sustainable cultural tourism destinations (Mergos and Patsavos, 2017; Athanassopoulos, 2004; Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Cleere, 2000), the first phase of the research included literature review and definition of key concepts as well as comparative analysis of the European, regional and national best practice in valorization of this specific category of heritage.

ICOMOS defines archaeological heritage as “that part of the material heritage in respect of which archaeological methods provide primary information. It comprises all vestiges of human existence and consists of places relating to all manifestations of human activity, abandoned structures, and remains of all kinds (including subterranean and underwater sites), together with all the portable cultural material associated with them”. The archaeological heritage constitutes the basic record of past human activities. Its protection and proper management is therefore essential to enable archaeologists and other scholars to study and interpret it on behalf of and for the benefit of present and future generations. For these and other reasons the protection of the archaeological heritage must be based upon effective collaboration between professionals from many disciplines. It also requires the cooperation of government authorities, academic researchers, private or public enterprise, and the general public. Since the archaeological heritage is a fragile and non-renewable cultural resource, its protection of the archaeological heritage should be integrated into planning policies at international, national, regional and local levels. Active participation by the general public must form part of policies for the protection of the archaeological heritage (ICOMOS 1990).

According to European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Council of Europe, 1992) archaeological heritage shall include structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other kinds as well as their context, whether situated on land or under water, which should be protected as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study.

Archaeological heritage is a concept wide in scope which encompasses all mobile and immobile monuments and the objects of the material culture of the past within a certain region. Archaeology studies the material culture of past epochs, although it has become the norm that the focus is on epochs lacking in written sources, or such sources which are of a smaller scope. Historical written sources, and archaeological heritage, together inform a story of the past. Until the second half of the 20th century, it was common to consider the upper boundary of archaeology to be the early or high Middle Ages (8–12th centuries), yet the application of archaeological methods, when researching heritage, has increasingly extended itself to include later historical periods such as the 19th and 20th centuries. Archaeological sites are places in which the remains of buildings and other solid structures created by the hand of man are located in the form in which they have

been found, and are of such dimensions that they cannot be transferred to a museum or similar collection. According to how they have been physically positioned, sites can either be terrestrial or marine (Buršić-Matijašić and Matijašić 2017).

The overall objective of *archaeological heritage management* should be the preservation of monuments and sites in situ, including proper long-term conservation and duration of all related records and collections etc. (ICOMOS 1990). In that context, very useful could be also McKercher's and DuCros's definition of cultural heritage management as the management of cultural resources, which include the systematic care for the sustainable maintenance of the cultural values of cultural goods in order that today's and future generations can enjoy them. Its main goal is to conserve and protect a representative sample of our heritage for the future (McKercher and du Cross 2002). Attention that professionals give to protection, preservation and presentation of archaeological heritage is revealed, among other things, through many archaeological sites that are on display for anyone interested and are now a part of the cultural tourism offer. Many of these sites, beside the very presentation of the architecture or modern reconstructions, offer some other elements, such as festivals, historical improvisations and other manifestations, experiments or various workshops, through which they are approaching the concept of an "archaeological park" (Mihelić 2009, 83).

Archaeological parks are places in which archaeological sites have been appropriated for visits, sight-seeing and education. They can be either in an urban or (more often) outside of an urban setting, and what is understood by this is the physical arrangement of archaeological remains by conservation or other forms of protection, the arrangement of paths and other equipment which allows the movement and sojourn of visitors, the arrangement of access and transport infrastructure. Their connection to tourism is without question, but they also have an important role in fulfilling the recreational and educational needs of the local population. Research has shown that there is an increased awareness on the importance of the presentation of heritage to the public, with pedagogical and educational implications, as well as tourism (Brajčić 2014).

Bearing in mind the regional specificity, the authors analyzed the best practice in sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage in the Euro-Mediterranean area: eco-archaeological parks, open-air museums and interpretation centres in Italy (Pompeii, Sicily), Greece (Athenian Acropolis, Delphy, Mycenae), Spain and Malta as well as the current situation in Croatia and Istria. Among the most famous and best presented prehistoric archaeological sites we could mention also Stonehenge in UK, Megalithic Temples of Malta, the ancient fortresses on the Aran Islands in Ireland or Talaiotic sites of Menorca, Spain. In Croatia, Vučedol Culture Museum or Museum of Krapina Neanderthals are good examples of multimedia interactive presentation and interpretation of prehistoric sites. The period of classical antiquity is well represented by Athenian Acropolis or Delphy, as well as by Italian archaeological parks in Rome, Pompeii, Siracusa and Agrigento (Valley of the Temples). Among the most important Croatian archaeological parks from the Roman Period we could mention the Andautonia Archaeological Park and Ecomuseum near the Croatian capital Zagreb, the Sopot Archaeological Park near

Vinkovci, or *Acqua Iasae*, an important Roman settlement next to a thermal spring of healing water (Mihelić 2009). Besides Naronia and Salona (the largest archaeological site in Croatia) in Dalmatia, the most important archaeological parks in Istria are Brijuni, Vižula, Nezakcij and Monkodonja (remains of a fortified Bronze Age settlement near Rovinj). The Istrian peninsula features an exceptionally dense concentration of fortified, hill fort settlements and numerous stone mounds that often represent remains of Bronze Age funerary monuments (more than 300 sites). The biggest archaeological park in Istria was created in the Brijuni Islands National Park, an archipelago of fourteen islands and islets. On the picturesque islands, inhabited already in prehistory were built luxury Roman maritime villas, and cultural layers from all periods were explored (Kalčić 2007). Brijuni are also the only archaeological park in Istria for which a ticket is charged. The Islands are visited annually by more than 160.000 tourists (Table 1).

Innovative participatory heritage management models include also cultural routes and educational paths, as well as experimental archaeology, community digs and practical workshops, which could involve the local community too. *Archaeological itineraries* (cultural routes and educational paths) are created by amalgamating archaeological attractions or various elements that form the complex cultural, historical, archaeological and ethnographical heritage of a particular area and their ample presentation, and as a result a completed story is achieved, which speaks with much more sense about every particular attraction than an individual presentation could. Among the most original thematic routes aimed at valorizing the archaeological heritage in Croatia is the Neanderthal Trail, which includes the sites with Neanderthal finds and geographically encompasses both continental and littoral parts of Croatia, from Krapina to Istrian and Dalmatian caves (Mihelić 2009, 323–324).

An increasingly popular form of interpretation of archaeological heritage are “*living history*” or “*living museums*” programmes, where the visitors can experience and taste the way of life, gastronomy and leisure of ancient inhabitants. We can mention festivals, such as “Ancient days in Pula” or “Sepomaia Viva—International Festival of Classical Antiquity” in Umag, “Ten Days of Diocletian” in Split or “Days of Andautonia” as the most successful living history program in continental Croatia.

Archaeotourism or archaeological tourism is an alternative type of cultural tourism that aims at promoting the passion for protection and valorization of historical sites. It offers the traveler an unforgettable experience through intensive courses about these specialized manifestations of human knowledge. The passion for history and heritage can be manifested in tourism through offering the excavation of as yet undiscovered finds, which puts the traveler in a position to directly

Table 1 NP Brijuni—annual number of visitors

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
151.007	153.084	160.010	182.560	166.303

Source NP Brijuni

experience the practice of archaeology that is the learning of a new skill. On the other hand, archaeological tourism implies also simple visits to archaeological sites, museums, interpretation centers, reenactments of historical events, festivals, theatres, and all those products connected with promoting archaeology to the public (Jelinčić 2009, pp. 27–28). Archaeological tourism resources include: sites on the World Heritage List, protected urban entities and monuments, archaeological sites and archeological landscapes, museums and archeological parks, as well as different ‘living history’ events and manifestations.

In that sense, archaeological tourism can be seen as a kind of creative tourism, i.e. tourism which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in courses and learning experiences, which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are taken (Raymond and Richards 2000). As a complement to *cultural tourism*, which ‘cares for the culture it consumes while culturing the consumer’ (Richards 2007, 1), *creative tourism* is travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture (UNESCO 2006). The benefits of creative tourism, as a sustainable alternative to classical mass tourism are already recognized: Creative tourism allows diversification of the tourist offers without any investment, just by optimizing existing tangible and intangible heritage. It supports quality tourism endowed with a high added value and purchasing power, based on authenticity and sustainability as it uses the creativity and culture as mean resource. There is a positive effect on the self-confidence of the local people thanks to this new interest for their culture and tradition. Its deseasonalizing character allows a better distribution of the tourist activity along the year. The minor interest of creative tourists in traditional “tourist attractions” contributes to a better spatial distribution within the destination and to intangible heritage recovery. Creative tourism could bring more skilled, experienced and educated tourists, who are looking for more interactivity. They want to experience the local culture by participating in artistic and creative activities, to live experiences where they can feel themselves as a local.

They spend a substantial part of the budget for the fulfillment of these activities/experiences, combining many types of tourism, during the same journey: creative, culinary, eco-tourism and slow tourism.

All these characteristics of the creative tourism, which value and enrich natural, cultural and human resources instead of exploit them in an unsustainable way could help to resolve the mentioned key problems of tourism in Istria and Croatia, but also in other similar Mediterranean destinations: high seasonality and concentration on the coast as well as inadequate valorization of the key local resources, including archaeological heritage.

The Strategy for the Protection, Conservation and Sustainable Economic Use of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2011–2015 defined the key issues in archaeological heritage management in Croatia (Ministry of Culture 2011, 40): inadequate documentation of archeological sites, low level of valorization of archeological sites, inadequate infrastructure equipment, inadequate presentation

and interpretation and management of visitors, unclear property and legal relations, inadequate cooperation with the economic sector in innovative interpretation programs, lack of planning and systematic training of staff for protection and conservation; lack of archaeological sites management plans, containing conservation component and sustainable use, lack of finance for the development of archeological parks, low levels of awareness of local citizens, local and regional self-government and educational institutions on the value of archaeological heritage as identity bearer, recognizability, sense of belonging and potential for sustainable use.

The archaeological heritage management planning process includes the following phases:

1. Involving different stakeholders in the planning process
2. Documenting the history of the site
3. Evaluation/valorisation of the site
4. Physical state and management context analysis
5. Definition of objectives (governance policy)
6. Selection of management strategies
7. Implementation, monitoring and revalorization of the process (Rukavina and Obad Šćitaroci 2016; Sullivan and Mackay 2012).

An important starting point for archaeological heritage management is the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders (local communities, tourism workers, city authorities, archaeologists, scientists, ministries of culture and tourism, planners and planners and others interested) in designing and planning.

Documentation of the history and location of the site involves collecting all the information about the site, its history and its current state. Based on these data, a site evaluation is carried out to determine and preserve its value fully, define goals and select a proper management strategy. The information collected on the management context (social, economic, political, legal and physical aspect of the site) and situational analysis, are inputs for the SWOT matrix.

The data obtained are the starting point for defining goals, policy and strategy that are based on previously collected information on the value, state and context of the site. The policy defines the principles and guidelines for further action. Special emphasis is placed on strategies that include maintenance, conservation and visiting. They include strategies for enhancing, using, and integrating archaeological heritage into contemporary life (Rukavina and Obad Šćitaroci 2016).

3 Methodology

Since the base of each strategic planning is a detailed situational analysis, the first phase of the research included gathering data on the field situation and researching the views of key local stakeholders. The authors proposed the innovative research methodology, which included a hybrid methodological approach, combining

qualitative and quantitative methods and interviews with all interested stakeholders (local community, visitors, experts). The main aim of the research was to develop a successful innovative strategy for sustainable cultural tourism growth in the most developed Croatian tourist region, Istria, characterized by abundance of archaeological sites, which are unfortunately still not adequately valorized, presented and interpreted.

The authors have tested the key hypotheses by elaborating potentials for valorization of archaeological heritage in the Municipality of Vrsar in Western Istria, as a typical coastal tourist destination in Croatia and on the Mediterranean, characterized by mass tourism and a remarkable seasonality: H1: mass tourism and high seasonality are still predominant models in Croatian tourism; H2: the most important Croatian tourist region, Istria has a great potential for development of cultural and creative tourism as sustainable alternatives to mass tourism; H3: cultural and creative tourism could diversify demand in space and time; H4: cultural and creative tourism could involve local community in heritage preservation; H5: archaeological heritage in Istria could be more adequately valorized, presented and interpreted through sustainable cultural and creative tourism; H6: the proper models of archaeological heritage management could help to sustainable development of tourism and the local community in Municipality of Vrsar too.

According to the proposed archaeological heritage management process, the research conducted in the framework of the situational analysis included workshops involving all key stakeholders, whose main purpose was to define the current situation, main problems and development priorities. Interviews and focus groups with experts were supplemented by local community survey and questionnaires for tourists, in which the attitudes towards the key attractions and development resources as well as the most appropriate models of sustainable cultural tourism development were explored (Richards and Munster, 2010). The first phase, conducted in March 2018, included interviews and focus groups with 15 experts, with the aim to define key issues and collect information for situational analysis. Local community survey was conducted from March to May 2018 and involved 200 inhabitants of Vrsar. The third phase of research, from May to September 2018, will involve 450 tourists.

The preliminary results pointed to key issues in destination dynamics, such as the willingness of the local community to be involved in tourism development planning, to develop in more sustainable way and to present and interpret the key cultural values and traditions adequately, not only to visitors but also to locals, through workshops, educational paths and interpretation centers.

4 Istria—The Leading Tourist Region in Croatia

Due to its extremely favorable geographic location in relation to the emissive tourist markets and regions of Central and Western Europe and the diverse natural and anthropogenic attractions, Istria County is today the most developed tourist region

in the Republic of Croatia.¹ In Istria in 2016 a fourth of tourist beds were registered in commercial accommodation facilities, a quarter of total tourist arrivals and almost a third of total tourist nights of the Republic of Croatia. In Istria are located 10 of the 25 top tourist destinations in Croatia, according to the total number of overnight stays of tourists (Central Bureau of Statistics 2017a). Geographical layout of tourism in Istria was developed in the first decade of this century to the extent that it is the only county in the Republic of Croatia, along with Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, which has commercial accommodation tourist facilities in all municipalities and cities (Curić et al. 2012).

Despite this layout, tourism in Istria has been largely geographically concentrated in coastal destinations in the last fifty years. Similarly, tourist arrivals and overnight stays have an extreme seasonal concentration in the summer months, reflecting the consequences of a tourism development model that is adapted to stationary, summer holiday tourism and the season of holidays, including the school holidays in nearby emissive regions (Ivandić et al. 2006). Furthermore, the largest contribution to Istrian tourism is given to those destinations that individually realize more than a million tourist nights. In 2016 there were a total of 10 such destinations: seven on the western Istrian coast: Funtana, Novigrad, Poreč, Rovinj, Tar-Vabriga, Vrsar and Umag, two on the southern part of the Istrian coast (Medulin and Pula) and Labin on the eastern coast.² In the area of these ten destinations in 2016, a total of 235 531 beds were registered in commercial accommodation facilities, which is 80% of beds in the region of Istria. In the same year, there were 3,212,775 tourist arrivals (85.4% of all arrivals in Istria) and realized 19,252,042 total nights, which is 83% of all overnight stays in Istria (Table 2).

The top Istrian tourist destinations are also characterized by a significant geographical and socioeconomic burden on the tourist activities and amenities. The analysis of the tourist intensity rate (TIR), tourist density rate (TDR) and the influence of tourist activities on the destination (TL)³ significant deviations and differences between the top destinations and the region Istria have been identified (Table 3).

The tourist intensity rates (TIR) of the top destinations significantly exceeds the result for the Istrian region, while within the ten top destinations there is a distinct difference between Funtana and Pula, which is understandable given the population

¹The Istrian Region is geographically equalized with the regional self-government unit of the Istrian County which consists of 31 municipalities and 10 cities.

²According to the criterion of accessibility, feasibility and comparability of destinations, they are geographically and administratively equal with the areas, the number of inhabitants and the total number of beds in commercial accommodation facilities, the total number of arrivals and overnight stays of tourists of the same local self-government units (towns and municipalities).

³The tourist intensity rate or the intensity of tourist traffic (TIR) shows the number of tourists for every 100 residents in a destination. The tourist density rate (TDR) is shown by the number of arrivals or overnight stays per diem in an individual area (km²) of a destination. The impact of tourism activity on a locality (TL) is a rate which shows the density of tourist beds in commercial accommodation facilities for an individual destination area (km²).

Table 2 Top destinations in Istria according to the number of beds, tourist arrivals and overnight stays in 2016

Destinations	Beds	Destinations	Tourist arrivals	Destinations	Tourist overnights	Average stay
Medulin	37,511	Rovinj	561,023	Rovinj	3,329,703	5.9
Rovinj	36,917	Poreč	511,898	Poreč	2,925,510	5.7
Poreč	27,571	Umag	408,213	Medulin	2,410,444	6.6
Pula	26,983	Medulin	365,457	Umag	1,960,834	4.8
Umag	24,959	Pula	330,590	Pula	1,606,582	4.9
Vrsar	19,821	Vrsar	214,177	Tar-Vabriga	1,598,574	7.7
Tar-Vabriga	18,553	Novigrad	207,644	Vrsar	1,562,243	7.3
Funtana	17,146	Tar-Vabriga	207,623	Funtana	1,512,243	7.6
Novigrad	13,123	Labin	206,666	Labin	1,253,394	6.1
Labin	12,947	Funtana	199,484	Novigrad	1,092,515	5.3
Ukupno	235,531	Ukupno	3,212,775	Ukupno	19,252,042	6.0
Istra	295,337	Istra	3,763,174	Istra	23,128,233	6.1

Source Calculated by the authors according to the data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017a)

Table 3 Tourist intensity rate (TIR), tourist density rate (TDR) and the influence of tourist activities on the destination (TL) in 2016

Destination	Area (km ²)	Population	TIR	Destination	TDR	Destination	TL
Funtana	796	964	2,069,336	Funtana	51,907	Funtana	215,402
Vrsar	3,646	2,149	996,636	Medulin	19,302	Medulin	109,938
Tar-Vabriga	2,711	2,224	933,557	Tar-Vabriga	16,111	Tar-Vabriga	68,436
Medulin	3,412	6,866	532,271	Rovinj	11,742	Vrsar	54,364
Novigrad	2,658	4,481	463,388	Vrsar	11,707	Pula	50,136
Rovinj	7,748	14,451	388,224	Novigrad	11,230	Novigrad	49,372
Poreč	11,167	17,127	298,884	Pula	8,156	Rovinj	47,647
Umag	8,218	13,828	295,208	Poreč	7,158	Umag	30,371
Labin	7,231	11,057	186,910	Umag	6,519	Poreč	24,690
Pula	5,382	56,527	58,484	Labin	4,736	Labin	17,905
Ukupno	52,969	129,674	247,758	Ukupno	9,931	Ukupno	44,466
Istra	2,813	208,109	180,827	Istra	2,246	Istra	10,499

Source Calculated by the authors according to the data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017a, b)

of these two destinations. The Tourist density rate (TDR) yet clearly points to the polarized development of tourism, in which Funtana, Medulin and Tar-Vabriga stand out. According to the value of density of tourist beds in commercial accommodation facilities for an individual destination area (TL), the top destinations quadruple exceed the average for the region of Istria, which confirms the

polarization of tourism development and the burden of smaller destinations. Such spatial-time concentration of tourist arrivals and overnights points to the need of reaffirmation of the tourism supply and reevaluation and different profiling of the natural and anthropogenic attraction basis.

As a typical case study that is further discussed, clarified and interpreted, because of the geographical concentration and the remarkable seasonality of tourism in the Istrian region, the Municipality of Vrsar was chosen. This destination is located on the western Istrian coast, in the southern part of the tourist micro-region Poreč-Vrsar littoral. This micro-region is the most developed tourist area in Istria and Croatia, where tourism and supporting activities have most influenced the entire geographical and socio-economic transformation of the cultural landscape (Iskra 1991; Perkovac 1993; Hrvatín 2006). Destination Vrsar is the municipality of the same name with nine settlements of which the majority of the population and the largest number of central functions has Vrsar settlement. Also, the municipality administration is located in the Vrsar settlement. The municipality has 2149 inhabitants at the end of 2016, according to the estimates of the Central Bureau of Statistics (2017b). Most of inhabitants (82%) live in Vrsar settlement. In this settlement there are 99% of all beds in commercial accommodation facilities of the municipality, including hotels and camps. In other settlements there are individual facilities (apartments, rural villas) intended for a shorter holiday. Therefore, the tourist development in the Vrsar destination showed a marked geographical orientation on the coastal area of Vrsar and significant concentration in the summer season and activities related to stationary, restful tourism with stable growth of all indicators (Table 4).

For example, in two key summer months—July and August 2016, the destination of Vrsar was visited by half of its tourists and 60% of the tourist overnights of that year were registered. Furthermore, in four months (June, July, August and September) in 2016, when the sea temperature permits pleasant swimming and other seaside recreation, the destination of Vrsar recorded 80% of all tourists arrivals and 88% of all overnight stays (Central Bureau of Statistics 2016). Seasonality of tourism and its geographical concentration in one settlement raises the issue of spatial and socioeconomic sustainability, although tourism and the similar activities provide to the local population numerous benefits. Considering the benefits that tourism has achieved, the example of Vrsar points to the necessity of

Table 4 Number of tourist beds, arrivals, overnights and average stay in Vrsar 2012–2016

Year	Beds	Tourist arrivals	Tourist overnights	Average stay
2012	18,763	177,469	1,429,075	8.1
2013	18,911	175,668	1,387,941	7.9
2014	19,026	187,475	1,414,816	7.5
2015	19,610	201,649	1,461,433	7.2
2016	19,821	214,177	1,562,246	7.3

Source Calculated by the authors according to the data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2013–2017)

strengthening differentiation of tourist supply in the direction of profiling sport, rural, cultural and creative tourism with the aim of releasing the summer season and reducing pressure on the narrow coastal belt.

5 Results—Valorisation of Archeological Heritage Through Sustainable Cultural and Creative Tourism—Vrsar as a Case Study

In the framework of the current project ArchaeoCulTour, the authors analyzed situation and potentials for sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage in Municipality of Vrsar, which was chosen as a case study because it has all characteristics of a typical Mediterranean tourist destination: high seasonality, mass tourism concentrated on the coast; inadequately valorized cultural heritage which is still not recognized as an important and valuable tourist resource and the tourism management model which is not enough participatory and inclusive, regarding the local creative resources. The territory of the Municipality of Vrsar on the western Istrian coast was inhabited since the earliest prehistory (Lower Paleolithic) until today, when Vrsar has become one of the most important centres of Istrian tourism. For that reason the collaboration of archaeology and tourism can be a good model for elaborating the possible forms of symbiosis, on which new paradigms for use in other historical-geographical and economic environments can be tested. The base for sustainable development of archaeological tourism could be also a very interesting and unique combination of the luxurious Roman villas built on the place of the former fortified, hillfort settlements from the Bronze Age. There are prehistoric hillforts in the territory of the Vrsar Municipality (Montegon, Mukaba, San Giorgio Island, Gradina, Monte Ricco, Vrsar: Buršić-Matijašić 2007), but none have been explored, so that a potential for future research is found in this field as well. A recently explored Bronze Age hillfort Monkodonja near Rovinj is a good example of an archaeological site well positioned in the context of a heritage—tourism symbiosis. The archaeological site of Monte Ricco is a prehistoric Bronze Age hillfort, which has been settled again at the turn of the Roman era in the 1st century B.C., when a luxurious villa rustica with a large cistern was built on the hill. The most famous local archaeological site is the a Late Roman residential building in Vrsar Harbour, where life pulsated during the whole antiquity, which is testified by new research conducted during recent years.

The preliminary results pointed to key issues in destination dynamics, such as the willingness of the local community to be involved in tourism development planning, to develop in more sustainable way and to present and interpret the key cultural values and traditions adequately and in a more creative way, not only to visitors but also to locals, through workshops, educational paths and interpretation centres. In the first phase of situational analysis, the authors elaborated the current issues regarding tourism and potentials for valorization of the most valuable local

cultural resources in a more sustainable and creative way, by interviewing key stakeholders and organizing workshops and focus-groups with experts. According to the purpose of this paper, the authors have conducted an empirical research aimed to find out the reflections of relevant experts regarding the actual situation and potentials of promoting and presenting archaeological sites through the sustainable cultural tourism concept. The authors have used the qualitative methodology of structured interviews, which were realized in April 2018. The results of the interviews and focus-groups with 15 experts from tourism and culture sector, local and regional government, archaeologists, scientists, NGO-s and representatives of the local community, are analyzed and presented in the following SWOT-matrix (Table 5).

The presented results of the situational analysis indicate the most important issues related to current situation and potentials for the more sustainable valorization of unique local cultural resources through cultural and creative tourism. It is obvious that, despite very rich natural and cultural heritage resources, the tourist offer is still characterized by high seasonality and mass tourism concentrated on the coast. Lack of strategic planning, collaboration and coordination of key stakeholders, inefficient destination management and inadequate spatial planning are supplemented by inadequate valorization of cultural heritage and local creative resources, which are still not recognized as a development potential and a motive for visiting Vrsar. On the other hand, local stakeholders see the opportunity for sustainable development of cultural tourism through creative valorization and interpretation of unique and most valuable local cultural resources.

This local case study could help to understand the current situation and potential for transition from the still dominant mass, beach tourism model focused on relaxation and leisure, via cultural tourism oriented toward classical cultural tours and tangible heritage to innovative models of creative tourism, which involve more interaction, and in which the visitor has an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there. Co-creation of creative tourist destination should include more involving and meaningful experience for both tourists and the local community.

The archaeological and other forms of creative eco-tourism, which allow co-creation of a different tourist experience, learning and exchange of information and knowledge between visitors and their hosts could help to cure the most important problems related to unsustainable tourism in the broader Euro-Mediterranean region: high-seasonality and geographic concentration of mass tourism which threatens the most valuable elements of tangible and intangible heritage. Such travel, directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage and special character of a place, will not only provide a connection with local community but also link in an innovative way the common past with a more sustainable future.

Table 5 Swot matrix on the potentials of valorisation of archaeological heritage in Istria County through sustainable cultural and creative tourism in Vrsar

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - favourable strategic position - preserved nature and environment - proximity of the Lime channel (protected natural area) - preserved and rich cultural heritage (churches, mosaics, sculpture garden, traditional gastronomy, archaeological sites, etc.) - active tourism (bikes, trail and trekking, climbing, kayak, diving) - proximity of Marina Vrsar, one of the best nautical ports in Croatia - small, safe and quiet place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sun and sea tourism model - insufficiently diversified tourism supply - high seasonality (tourist arrivals concentrated mainly in the summer season from May to September) - insufficient valorisation of cultural heritage - insufficient collaboration and coordination of key stakeholders - inefficient destination management - inadequate spatial planning - lack of qualified employees (staff) in the last few years - insufficient high quality accommodation facilities - insufficient sport facilities - insufficient collaboration of the public and the private sector - cultural heritage is not recognised as a motive for choosing Vrsar as a tourism destination - relatively low tourist consumption - insufficient tourist attractions - lack of an institution for cultural and natural heritage management - lack of strategic planning - insufficient involvement of the local community in tourism planning and realisation of projects - lack of cultural routes - lack of specialised tourist guides for cultural tourism - lack of cultural tourism strategy

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - developing cultural tourism through the project of arranging the monastery of St. Mihovil, participation in various Interreg projects and the ArchaeoCulTur project - valorisation of cultural heritage through sustainable cultural tourism (churches, od city centre, mosaics, archaeological site Monte Ricco, archaeological sites in the Lim channel and forest Kontija, quarry Montaker with the sculpture school, the story about “pietrad’Orsera (Orsera’s stone), painter Edo Murtić, itinerary Casanova Tour in collaboration with Istra Inspirit, etc.) - organisation of interactive workshops and events or programs of revived history - development of cultural routes archaeological parks, cultural routes, interpretational centres/museums - improved and more specified promotion of the destination - Vrsar as a city of sculptures – potential brand - project of underwater sculptures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - climate changes - competition of neighbouring tourism destination with similar tourism concept based on sun and sea - decreased interest of tourists

Source: Authors’ research

6 Conclusion

The conducted research, whose main aim was to define the conceptual and analytical framework for the research on the development potential of archaeological heritage in Istria County, Croatia, indicated some of the key issues and problems related to archaeological heritage management and its sustainable valorization through cultural and creative tourism. The first phase of the research, which involved all relevant stakeholders in the participatory heritage management process, confirmed most of the key hypotheses. Local community and experts agree that:

- mass tourism and high seasonality are still predominant models in Croatian tourism;
- the most important Croatian tourist region, Istria has a great potential for development of cultural and creative tourism as sustainable alternatives to mass tourism;
- cultural and creative tourism could diversify demand in space and time, extending the season and valorizing areas beyond the coast;

- local community should be more involved in heritage preservation and sustainable tourism development plans;
- archaeological heritage in Istria could be more adequately valorized, presented and interpreted through innovative models of cultural and creative tourism;
- creative models of heritage presentation and interpretation could help to sustainable development of tourism in the Municipality of Vrsar; and the local community in Municipality of Vrsar too.

Comparative analysis of regional, national and European good practice in sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage has shown that there already exist successful models which could be used in the process of developing of innovative strategy for sustainable cultural tourism growth in the most developed Croatian tourist region, Istria, characterized by abundance of archaeological sites, which are still not adequately valorized, presented and interpreted. Elaborated potentials for valorization of archaeological heritage in the Municipality of Vrsar in Western Istria could be useful also for other coastal tourist destinations in Croatia and on the Mediterranean, characterized by mass tourism and a remarkable seasonality. The local case study could help to understand the current situation and potential for transition from the still dominant mass, beach tourism model focused on relaxation and leisure, via cultural tourism oriented toward classical cultural tours and tangible heritage to innovative models of creative tourism, which involve more interaction, and in which the visitor has an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there. Co-creation of creative tourist destination should include more involving and meaningful experience for both tourists and the local community.

The preliminary analysis indicated also the most appropriate models of sustainable valorization of archaeological heritage, such as the eco-archaeological parks, open-air museums and interpretation centres, living history programs, cultural routes and educational paths, as well as community digs and practical workshops as models of participatory heritage management which would involve the local community too through innovative creative tourism experiences.

References

- Afrić Rakitovac, K., & Urošević, N. (2017). *Models of Valorisation of Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Tourism*, Pula.
- Athanassopoulos, E. F. (2004). *Mediterranean Archaeological Landscapes*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. *Current Issues*.
- Buršić-Matijašić, K., & Matijašić, R. (2017). Management of archaeological heritage in Istria county. In K. Afrić Rakitovac, N. Urošević (Eds.), *Models of valorisation of cultural heritage in sustainable tourism*, Pula.
- Buršić-Matijašić, K. (2007). *GradineIstre – Povijestprijevijesti*, Knjiga 6, Zavičajnanaklada “ŽakanJuri”, Pula.
- Brajčić, M. (2014). *Arheološki parkovi u Hrvatskoj – stanje i perspektive*, FilozofskifakultetSveučilišta u Splitu, Split.

- Cleere, H. (2000). *Archaeological heritage management in the modern world*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. (2013–2017). *Tourism, various volumes*. Zagreb: Croatian Bureau of Statistics
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). *First release tourism*. Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb. June–September 2016
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. (2017a). *Tourism 2016*. Statistical report 1594. Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics. (2017b). *Estimation of the population of the Republic of Croatia by sex by the end of 2016 by cities/municipalities*. Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb
- Čurić, Z., Glamuzina, N., & Opačić, V. T. (2012). Contemporary issues in the regional development of tourism in Croatia. *Hrvatskigeografski glasnik*, 74(1), 19–40.
- Edwards, R., & Holland, J. *What is Qualitative Interviewing*, 17. http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/3276/1/complete_proofs.pdf
- Hänsel, B., Mihovilić, K., & Teržan, B. (2011). Monkodonja 1, *Monografije i katalogi*, 25, Pula.
- Hrvatini, D. (2006). RazvikturističkeizgradnjenapriobaljuPoreštine: Od ušćarijekeMirne do Limskogazaljeva. *Prostor*, 14(32), 228–236.
- ICOMOS. (1990). *Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage*. https://www.icomos.org/charters/arch_e.pdf. Accessed 20 Apr 2018.
- Iskra, B. (1991). Tipološkaanaliza i klasifikacijazgradenih turističkih objekatazapadneobale Istre u kontekstunjihovihsilueta i uklapanja u specifičanpejzaž. *GospodarstvoIstre*, 4, 74–89.
- Ivandić, N., Telišman-Košuta, N., Čorak, S., & Krešić, D. (2006). Ljetniodmorišniturizam. In *Hrvatskiturizam: plavobijelozeleno* (ur. Čorak, S. i Mikačić, V.), Institutzaturizam, Zagreb.
- Jelinčić, D. A. (2009). Cultural and archaeological tourism. In S. Mihelić (Ed.), *Archaeology and tourism in Croatia*. Zagreb: Archaeological Museum Zagreb.
- Kalčić, M. (2007). *Istrian Archaeological Parks: The Path of Gods*, Istria County, Pula
- Mergos, G., & Patsavos, N. (2017). *Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development, Economic Benefits, Social Opportunities and Policy Changes*, Chania.
- Mihelić, S. (2009). *Archaeology and tourism in Croatia*. Zagreb: Archaeological Museum Zagreb.
- McKercher, B., & du Cros, H. (2002). *Cultural tourism, the partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management*. Binghamton: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- Perkovac, Ž. (1993). *Turizam i geoprostorPoreštine*, IKD JurajDobrila, Pazin
- Richards, G., & Raymond, C. (2000). Creative tourism. *ATLAS News*, 23, 16–20.
- Richards, G. (2007). *Cultural Tourism*. New York, London: Global and Local Perspectives.
- Richards, G., & Munster, W. (2010). *Cultural tourism research methods* (p. 2010). Oxford: CABI.
- Rukavina, M., & ObadŠćitaroci, M. (2016). Upravljanje arheološkim naslijeđem-Procespovezan s urbanističkim i prostornim planiranjem. *Znanstveničasopiszaarhitekturu i urbanizam*, 23, 108–117.
- Sullivan, S., & Mackay, R. (2012). *Archaeological sites: conservation and management*. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.
- Timothy, D. J., & Boyd, S. W. (2003). *Heritage tourism*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- UNESCO Creative Cities Network. (2006). *Towards Sustainable Strategies for Creative Tourism: Discussion Report of the Planning Meeting for 2008 International Conference on Creative Tourism*, Santa Fe.