



## STANDARDIZATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF EVENTS IN TOURISM BASED ON A SYSTEMS APPROACH

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### Abstract:

In this article we wanted to present the importance of event tourism for a destination and categorization of events considering the quality of organization, the quality of staff working on the event, the quality of the event program and the quality of event services. Our theoretical contribution to science is presented by the systems approach method which provides a clear overview of the researched topics and adequate support to decision making. The systems approach method is aimed at understanding the problem and finding an optimal solution. Our intention is to achieve the desired results and positive changes in the field of event tourism using the theory of systems. Within the systems approach method, we also used qualitative modeling of the CLD model of legislative system of events and investments in the events. We have presented our suggestions for achieving these elements through quality standards and classification of events, which leads to optimal categorization of events. Events take place every day, throughout the year, in and out of season, and their number increases each year. This is the main reason for giving more attention to the development of event tourism in the future. High quality events can distinguish us from other destinations and provide a clear advantage over the competition.

### Key words:

the standardization and classification of event,  
 the quality of event,  
 the categorization and specialization of event,  
 modeling,  
 systems approach,  
 CLD model,  
 the legislative system of events.

### INTRODUCTION

Event tourism attracts crowds of visitors and tourists to a particular destination due to its attractiveness and diversity.

Events that delight people, guests in hotels and business systems, local communities and the whole world, have started to rise rapidly (Jere Lazanski, 2004). Events are interesting because of their transience, unique landscape, number of performers, organizers and crowds of visitors.

Organizational environment, as an external system, is connected with other systems which have an influence on it and consequently influences the internal environment of the company (Jere Lazanski, 2006). The main aim and purpose of events is to

create positive economic, social and environmental outcomes which would affect development of the destination and the quality of life of local people. However, all that is added value, which gives us a chance to be different from competition. We often talk about quality events that create positive image, which consequently results in an increase of site visits and events in tourist destination.

Event tourism has two meanings:

- ◆ “The systematic planning, development, and marketing of events as tourist attractions, promotions for other developments, image builders, and animators of attractions and destination areas; event tourism strategies should also cover the management of news and negative events.

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- ♦ A market segment consisting of those people who travel to attend events, or who can be motivated to attend events while away from home” (Getz, 1997, p. 16).

We can also add that it is very important for all relevant stakeholders in tourism to be aware that events can create competitive advantage that has a positive effect on the environment attraction and tourist destination. Certainly, events, because of their diversity and frequency, have positive influence on the quality of leisure time for local population as well as for tourists. Visitors acquire new knowledge by participating in various events (both cultural and artistic). Would we still doubt the importance and necessity of introducing standardization and classification of events after all that?

“Modern events can be created in order to recall historical, ethnologic, geographic, sports, music and other facts, which were described, written, sung, filmed and revived in a certain place, time, scale, with certain people, means and performance. The purpose should address, and be compatible with, the stated objectives of the event organizational institution” (Jere Lazanski, 2004).

The idea of tourism system has been developed on the basis of already established systems theory. Jere Lazanski (2010) has systematically linked the systems, modern system theory and Mayans, and therefore contributed to science as the Mayans became the predecessors of the systems science. However, the basic definition of general systems theory was made by Ludvig Von Bertalanffy (1968) in his classic work “General Systems Theory” and also by authors who were dealing with it: Kljajić (1994); Jere Lazanski (2009, 2012); Smith - Acuña, (2011) and others. Bertalanffy (1968) points out that the general system theory is solving the problem of modern society as an open system, while emphasizing that science should not be divided, but must be combined.

Literature review reveals that system theory is applied to various fields of science: in cybernetics (Kljajić, 1994), mathematics, biology (Maturana and Varela, 1998) and also in tourism (Jere Lazanski, 2009); particularly in connection with tourism systems (Leiper, 1990; Baggio and Sainaghi, 2011; Baggio, 2013); tourist destination (Vodeb, 2010); a system of sustainable development (McDonald, 2009; Stubej and Bohanec, 2010; Nguyen *et al.*, 2011; Camus *et al.*, 2012), as an approach to innovation (Mulej, 1994; Mulej and Ženko, 2002); or otherwise like a systemic perspective to the management ideas (Fatur and Likar, 2009; Ropret *et al.*, 2014) and so on.

Methods of system thinking are fundamental methodological principles in our analysis. They have been used for over 40 years and eventually became highly developed. They ask from us not to look at the processes as isolated events and not to perceive their causes as some other events, but to see the organization as a system composed of parts that are in interaction with each other. From systemic point of view, business processes are systems consisting of people and technologies with the purpose of designing, producing, trading and deploying the idea of a product or service. In management we usually come across the problems for which we assume to be the results of external events.

Theoretically, systems and systematic thinking are emphasized, as these processes have been gaining in importance and development. The systematic approach deals with the entire system and not with the individual parts of elements, representing their interdependence at the same time.

In the context of systems approach, we used qualitative modeling of casual loop diagrams. Systems approach represents an aspect of integrity, which includes both, the importance of structure of the observed problems, as well as visual indicators of the problem. This aspect is becoming more and more appreciated nowadays, because we do not get to the optimal solution with the classic analytic approach, as it is only dealing with visible indicators of the problem. The systems approach, defined by Kljajić (1994) as a fundamental approach to problem solving, has been used in the research, so as to find the best or at least good enough solutions taking into account the integrity and limitations of the system.

Our guidelines for organizing quality events, which can be achieved only through legal system for events, are given below. We also present the construction of qualitative cause and effect casual loop diagram (CLD) in the field of the legislative system of events.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### STANDARDIZATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF EVENTS

Due to the abundance and diversity of events, it is necessary to introduce the system of quality assurance and to standardize the events. This would prevent good events on the market from getting lost in the critical mass and flood of the similar events. Because of the increasing demand, we have come to



the point where we have to regulate all these services through the classification and standards. Cvikl states that establishment and implementation of quality systems in accordance with the standards is the objective of quality control activities in the company. Standards are important for harmonization and mutual recognition quality system that meets the standards and provides several benefits. A standard defines and provides quality and a criterion for achieving the required quality (adapted from Cvikl, 2008).

Ribnikar (1998) defines standardization as an agreement or a law establishing rules, which would provide a solution for the future potential problems. Standardization also enables specialization and cooperative working units, provides consistent quality products, streamline and brings greater productivity at work, allows large scale production and simplifies control services. It also reduces production costs.

Even though almost everything is already standardized, there are still new areas opening up. Whenever it is necessary, the standards will continue to be developed, revised and supplemented (Slovenian Institute for standardization<sup>1</sup> 2007). So why wouldn't we go further and also propose standards for events?

Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2007) defines classification as "a break-down of something taking into account equal or similar characteristics." Therefore it classifies individual events within individual criteria. We propose that these criteria relate to the volume and the level of events (local, regional, national or international events), the size of the organizing team, the legal organizational structure of the organization (private / profit, non – profit / voluntary, government agencies / public – private groups), which deals with events as well as with types of events. The reasons for such characteristics are different. First of all, it is because of the diversity of the event organizers, then the diversity of institutions dealing with the organization of events and finally

due to the diversity of events being offered to us on a daily basis. Table 1 shows us the variety of events.

Political, state	Sports	Recreational	Educational, scientific
VIP-visit, Rally / assembly inauguration.	Professional and amateur.	Games and sports, Entertainment events.	Seminars, congresses, workshop, conference.
Cultural	Entertainment	Business	Private
Festivals, carnivals, parade, religious events.	Concerts, exhibition, awards, performances.	Fairs, markets, auction, PR events, meetings.	Social celebrations, social events.

Table 1: The diversity of events depending on the type of events  
Source: (Adapted from Getz, 1997, p. 7)

### CATEGORIZATION OF EVENTS

Categorization contributes to the safety of a tourist as a consumer. It is a form of verification of the owners and managers, professional basis for promotion and work of employees and also the opportunity to look for better solutions through innovations. Categorization is seen as a minimum that needs to be provided for tourists. It should therefore be perceived as a constant path to quality improvement (Bizjak, 1997). When we mention the word categorization, the first idea we think of is the classification of accommodation facilities and the minimum technical requirements that must be met by the landlord business. According to that, the categorization of events defines the way of identifying conditions of labeling the events with stars or other symbols. We propose a star because this symbol has been already accepted as a synonym for quality. The categorization is based on minimum standards, which means that each implemented event meets minimum standards fully and because of that it is marked with the symbol of category or quality. These events, which will be marked with the symbol of quality, are distinguished according to the different quality standards and services.

We suggest the following rate of complexity of the whole event:

- ◆ an appropriate and satisfactory event (\*\*),
- ◆ suited event (\*\*\*) – quality must be good,

1 "Slovenian Institute for standardization (SIST) is the Slovenian national standards body responsible for preparing and adopting voluntary standardization documents, and representing the interests of Slovenia in the international (ISO and IEC), and European (CEN, CENELEC, ETSI) organizations for standardization, in which it holds full memberships. SIST ensures equal involvement of all interested parties in standardization activities thus enabling the co-development of European and international standardization" (SIST, 2011).



- ◆ first class event (\*\*\*\*) – quality must be very good,
- ◆ exclusive, luxury event (\*\*\*\*) – quality must be perfect, without blemish.

We must be aware that standardization and classification of events, which also provides optimal categorization of events, will lead us to European norms and open our demanding tourism market to potential beneficiaries of such forms of tourism. The number of events increases each year and therefore even excellent events fade within a crowd of others. The proposed system of events standardization and classification would encourage both sponsors and potential investors and prevent possible abuse of consumer rights as well. Finally, the system also enables the visitors to compare the level of quality of events among different tourist's destination.

## QUALITY THROUGH SPECIALIZATION FOR EVENTS

Cvikl (2008) defines quality as a reflection of the roadworthiness of tourism product and meeting the expectations and demands of tourists as much as possible. So, the organizers of events must satisfy the wishes and needs of consumers or visitors in order to achieve their pre-set goals. Quality is the characteristic of a product or service that differs it from other similar types of products in some detail and peculiarities. In market economy there are many manufacturing or service companies committed to the highest quality products and services at minimum possible costs (Ribnikar, 1998).

In event tourism it is very difficult to determine and assess the level and quality of supply. Cvikl (2008) considers that it is extremely difficult to evaluate and assess the most important features of customer's services and the extent to which their expectations in terms of quality should be satisfied. The reason for this lays in the fact that the visitors have completely different perceptions of quality, set forth by their beliefs, values or motives.

The visitors' motives, the reason they decide to attend an event or even opt for a short trip or vacation, are presented below. Their decision is influenced by:

- ◆ uniqueness – the opportunity to experience something new,
- ◆ sociability – meeting and talking with people, nice atmosphere,

- ◆ education – the opportunity to learn something new and authentic,
- ◆ event packages – social and travel experience,
- ◆ participation in events – watching friends and relatives who participate in events (adapted from Getz, 1997, p. 110).

It is easier for event organizers to ensure better quality when they organize events for a specific target group and take into account previously listed subjects. This can be achieved only through specialization of events, which helps to increase the confidence in tourism products on the market. Specialization of events is mostly done because of knowledge that the whole range of events needs to be closer to the wishes and needs of participants. Visitors will recognize the type of event by the specialization symbol given by the event organizer. Thereby, we could meet their expectations and requirements better. So what is the specialization of events? It could be defined as identification of the organizer's activities for each type of event, which could be legally obtained through the symbol of specialization demonstration. Slovenian Dictionary defines specialization as:

1. orientation, limiting the activity of the narrow scope;
2. acquisition of specific, in-depth knowledge in the specialized field of a profession.

So, the main purpose of specialization is to achieve:

- ◆ greater visibility of supply,
- ◆ building trust related to the events quality,
- ◆ increased competitive ability,
- ◆ better understanding of price difference,
- ◆ better market process of known target group,
- ◆ target information and advertising,
- ◆ designing unique and specific event.

## METHOD OR DYNAMICS OF SYSTEM THINKING

The application of systems methodology, which is backed up with a systems approach or thinking, is the main methodological principle behind our analysis. System thinking is always supported by an appropriate modeling; therefore, we will show the construction of qualitative cause and effect casual loop diagram (CLD) in the field of the legislative system of events.



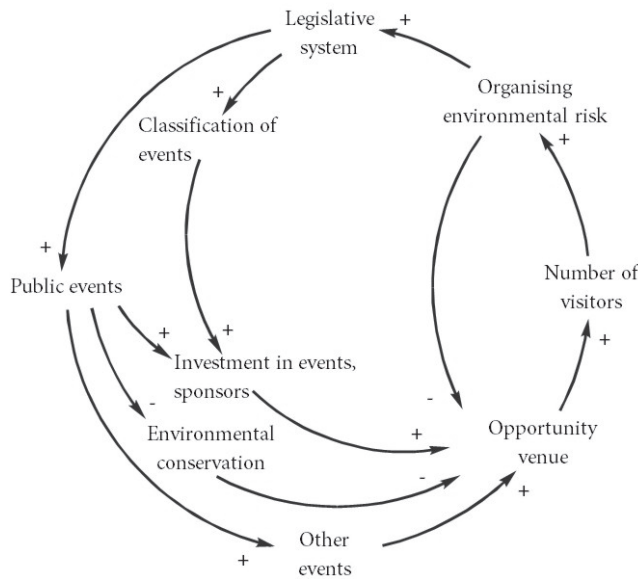


Figure 1: Construction of the CLD model in the field of the legislative system of events

We have developed a CLD model or systems model which presents the Slovenian legislation system that has a positive impact on public events (+). Public events, in turn, have a positive impact on other events (private, sports, recreational, cultural, educational) (+), and these events improve the attractiveness of the environment offered by Slovenian event environment (+). The legal system has a positive impact (+) on the classification of events, which in turn has a positive impact (+) on investments in events and sponsors, who consequently positively influence (+) the attractiveness of event environment. The attractiveness increases the number of visitors (+), which causes an increased uncertainty (risk) of a venue (+), and the risk in turn reduces the attractiveness of the environment (-). Public events have a negative impact on the conservation of the environment (-), which in turn reduces the attractiveness of an area (-). Circles of positive feedback mean development, but it must be stressed that any downfall in the circle is followed by growth. For example, if environment is ecologically unsafe, therefore less preserved, that reduces the attractiveness of the area, which is necessarily followed by a chain reaction in reducing the number of visitors. It is also followed by the expected loss of revenue from admissions and by a reduction in investment related to the event. It is important to be able to assess risks and benefits wherever the circles with negative feedback and positive feedback meet.

“These models are rich in their content and relevant in development determination of the system

as a whole. The negative or control circle illustrates the limiting factor in development. Although it is inevitable, it can be controlled by a company. A diagram is abstract enough to allow qualitative analysis of the system and a pre-sign of circles of reverse connections. This is a structural analysis of the systems model. This step is very important and this technique allows us to define virtually any phenomenon in a rational way” (Jere Lazanski, 2009).

## DISCUSSION

We came to the conclusion that a competitive advantage and added value of tourist destinations can be achieved by improving the quality of events.

“Gradually, with global tourism, events that please people are starting to prevail in tourism and hotel business systems, both in their hometowns and all around the world. Event management and event tourism are starting to become essential features for local and global tourist authorities” (Jere Lazanski, 2004).

Event tourism has very important role in the development of tourism because it attracts tourists out of season and thus prolongs the season itself. There is a growing number of events and event tourism is becoming more important. It is essential that events take place throughout the year and not only during the high season. This shows us that the number of events is on the rise every year. According to the Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia (STAT), the number of events is increasing (number of events in the cultural institutions in 2009: 8.855; 2010: 11.121; 2011: 11.453, 2012: 17.473), which tells us that the competitive advantage and added value are vital in differentiation from the competition. Jere Lazanski (2008) also points out that unhappy event visitors, poor ticket sales and cancellations lead to a failure of an event in general. Focusing on events like these is like wearing blinkers; we can only react to each event instead of planning and developing it. This confirms that such events are numerous, as well as previously mentioned moments of risk, which is why standardization and classification of events is urgent and necessary. This could be solved by the introduction of a comprehensive regulatory system, which would set and define minimum standards that should be considered by event organizers. This would probably



lead to poor performances, reduce the moments of risk and thus, we facilitate the path to excellence. Mainly, we could boost tourism development, which would be based on quality complementary offer – the events. Finally, the unique events in the future could be the main motive for the arrival of tourists to a particular tourist destination.

Due to their diversity, flexibility and complexity as well as the complex interrelated elements that contribute to their quality, events are herein considered in the light of scientific approach, through the theory of systems supported by system thinking.

It can be concluded from our study that the adoption of an act or law on standardization and classification of events at the national level is necessary for successful further development of event tourism.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In qualitative modeling we were looking for the most appropriate and best solution to eliminate our problem or question about how to achieve high quality and unique events, thereby creating added value of Slovenian tourism. Therefore, we have come to a simple solution. It is necessary to transform the current legislative system of events and prepare a document of standardization and classification of events.

Many areas, not only those related to tourism, have adopted specific legislative systems, where certain standards of quality and categorization are set (for example: as it is regulated in the field of classification of accommodation, standardization for conferences, categorization of scientific publications, categorization of advertising space and much more). So, why shouldn't we adopt standards of quality for events as well, as there are certain minimum standards and norms that are required to be achieved for the quality and safe events? In addition, none of the regulatory systems regulates the field of standardization and classification of events at the national level.

The adoption of the Act on standardization and classification of events is a great asset, because it creates an added value for all events directly. That will also differentiate us from the competition. The fact is that we always talk about quality events and events that are creating a positive image, which consequently additionally increase visits.

Because of these facts we shall not suppress the future development possibilities in the field of regulation of the legislative system of events, par-

ticularly sustainably oriented events, as sustainable development is the priority area in tourism (SRST 2012 - 2016).

While reviewing the current legislation we found that it is fragmented, opaque and scattered in various documents, and thus not so easily available to event organizers. This confirms the assumption that topics need to be treated systematically – which allows the holistic interpretation. This is the only way to cross disciplinary boundaries and understand the dynamic event management as well as to manage the chaos complexity. To manage this, it is necessary to establish the system that will provide information, management and operation of the system as a whole.

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## STANDARDIZACIJA I KLASIFIKACIJA DOGAĐAJA U TURIZMU NA OSNOVU SISTEMSKOG PRISTUPA

### Rezime:

U ovom članku želeli smo da prikazemo važnost turizma događaja za destinaciju i kategorizaciju događaja, imajući u vidu kvaliteta organizacije, kvalitet osoblja zaduženog za realizaciju događaja, kao i kvalitet programa i usluga samog događaja. Naš teorijski doprinos nauci dat je u okviru metode sistemskog pristupa koja omogućava jasan pregled tema istraživanja, kao i odgovarajuću podršku donošenju odluka. Metod sistemskog pristupa uvek teži razumevanju problema i pronalaženju optimalnog rešenja. Namera nam je bila da postignemo željene rezultate i postignute promene u polju turizma događaja koristeći teoriju sistema. U okviru metode sistemskog pristupa, koristili smo i kvalitativno modelovanje CLD modela zakonodavnog sistema događaja i investiranja u iste. Dali smo predloge za postizanje ovih elemenata, kroz usvajanje standarda kvaliteta i klasifikaciju koja vodi ka optimalnoj kategorizaciji događaja. Svakog dana, tokom čitave godine, u sezoni i van sezone, organizuju se događaji u turizmu, čiji se broj konstantno povećava. To je glavni razlog zbog čega više pažnje treba posvetiti razvoju turizma događaja u budućnosti. Visoko kvalitetni događaji nas mogu izdvojiti od konkurencije i obezbediti nam konkurentsku prednost.

### Ključne reči:

standardizacija i klasifikacija događaja, kvalitet događaja, kategorizacija i posebno označavanje događaja, modelovanje, pristup sistemu, CLD model, zakonodavni sistem događaja

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