

Celebrating 10 years of Dubrovnik Card- lessons learned

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Celebrating 10 years of Dubrovnik Card- lessons

learned

SENIOR PROJECT

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Dubrovnik, May 2020

Abstract

The primary goal of this research project was to investigate the methods for improvement of Dubrovnik Card, and the benefits the improvement would bring to Dubrovnik as a destination. The author tried to obtain the information in the secondary research, referring to the European destination cards, which has been correlated with the secondary analysis of data provided to the author by Dubrovnik Card, and the survey conducted among the employees selling the product. The research investigated the utilization of attractions included in the offer, and the customer feedback. The research indicated several advancement methods. The emphasis was put on the implementation of technological software in the card; which would be able to contribute in the development of Destination Management Organization of Dubrovnik.

Keywords: Destination Management Organization, Destination Card, Tourism development and planning, City Tourism

DESTINATION CHALLENGE

In recent decades traveling industry and the customer expectations have tremendously shifted from the basic requirements to much higher expectations. To keep competitive in this new, changed international tourism market, destinations need to provide their visitors with the experiences which will be remembered and valued (Kim and Ritchie, 2014). According to the D. Buhalis (2000) “The international tourist industry is becoming an increasingly competitive marketplace where only the best-managed destinations are likely to prosper.” To be able to do so, destination managers need to overcome the next challenge: destinations are heterogeneous and the tourist experience is influenced by various different elements as attractions, hotels, gastronomic offer, travel agencies, and transport providers. Frequently, each mentioned factor is functioning individually and often competing with the others, which creates an additional challenge in creating an integrated product which will make the customer experience special, and thus memorable (Buhalis, 2000).

According to Drozdowska, Duda-Seifert, Faron (2018) the destination should strive to “find a competitive advantage through bundling separate products and creating an aggregated tourist experience.”

DESTINATION CARD

One of the mediums which enables to overcome above mentioned challenges, and provides the opportunity for the destination to bundle all services within it, is the destination or tourist card. Destination card is one of the destination marketing tools which combines a number of different services, provided by numerous service providers at the discounted price (Ispas A., Constantin C.P., Candrea A.N., 2015).

Usually this type of product offers benefits such as free admissions for museums, churches, monuments, discounts in shops and restaurants, free public transport, guide books,

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maps and may include priority access. It is valid for a specific time period; most commonly it is for 24 hours or three days. The cards usually operate on the stamp or smart chip activation (Integrated...2014).

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

The main purpose of the destination card is to bundle services and attractions into one service package which will enable tourists to skip the step of researching, booking and buying the tickets in advance; what results in saving their time and resources (Pechlaner, Abfalter 2000).

Another benefit of the card is that it produces higher number of visits for cultural attractions, and increases the use of public transport. As well, the goal of the card is to increase the length of tourist stay, once they become aware of the attractions and services offered. According to the European Parliamentary Research Service (2014) in Germany and Austria it is proved that tourists would visit more attractions if they purchased a destination card, as well their positive perception of the destination is proven to be higher. In 2000 Kuhn found that 92% of 945 tourists wouldn't have visited as many attractions as they did with the card. As well, it is proven that consumers of the card preferred using public transport, although they had a private car available (European Parliamentary Research Service, STOA., 2014.).

Destination cards are considered to be a marketing and destination management tool. They can serve the purpose of being an agent for networking and clustering within the destination and its service providers. In addition, if the cards are technologically adapted, they can serve in collection of the data on the movement of tourists, and the pattern of their movement within the destination (Sedláková, Dominika & Heřmanová, Eva & Indrová, Jarmila. (2014)). Technologically adapted cards are as well connected with information

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services; thus, the tourists are able to receive information about the waiting times, traffic jams, or crowds. Such cards can be used as well to personalize the tourist experience (Integrated...2014).

HISTORY

The development of the city cards in Europe is connected with the establishment of the European Cities Tourism in 1998. To become a member of the European Cities Tourism, cities need to fulfill next requirements: possession of important historical monuments, hosting of cultural programs, and capability of providing conferences and congresses, and at least one hundred thousand inhabitants, with accommodation capacity of at least three thousand beds. Currently 85 cities are the members of European Cities Tourism Organization. Out of 85 cities, 38 participate in the project European City Cards (Sedláková, Dominika & Heřmanová, Eva & Indrová, Jarmila. (2014)).

EUROPEAN DESTINATION CARDS

Henceforth, the destination card offers from three members of the organization- Barcelona, Amsterdam and Budapest will be analyzed together with the destination card of Dubrovnik. All four destination cards enable to the customers free admission to the most important attractions, free public transport, and various discounts. The prices, duration, and technology used will be compared.

In Amsterdam the tourists are able to purchase “I Amsterdam City Card”. The price of 24-hour card is 65 euros, 48-hours for 85 euros, 72-hour for 105 euros, 96-hour for 120 euros, and 120-hour for 130 euros. It includes free admission into 70 museums and attractions, free canal cruise, public transport, and discounts for restaurants, events and excursions. It offers ability to personalize the experience using the mobile app, and to book the time slots for the museums on the Card webpage. The Card has two chips that are activated separately: one for

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museums or attractions, and the other one for public transport. The Card can be purchased online and picked up at Visitor Centers in Amsterdam, or it can be bought directly in the Centers. As well, it can be shipped directly to hotels (I Amsterdam).

Barcelona offers the destination Card for 72-hours with the price of 46 euros, 96-hour card for 56 euro, and 120-hour card for 61 euro. It includes the free rides on the metro, buses, Catalan railways, trams and the airport train. Discounts and free admission at Barcelona's most important museums are provided, as well as leisure attractions, tours and entertainment. Card includes complimentary guide in six languages (English, Catalan, Spanish, French, German and Italian) with information about free deals and discounts and location on the city map. Tourists can buy the card online and collect it at any Tourist Information Office. The card is smart, with NFC chip integrated (Turisme de Barcelona).

In Budapest it is as well possible to buy 24-hour card for 22 euros, 48-hour for 33 euros, 72-hour for 43 euros, 96-hour for 53 euros, and 120-hour for 63 euros. The offer includes unlimited free public transport, 19 museums, free entry to the Lukács Bath, free sightseeing tours, a cave tour and free entry to the Palace of Wonders. The card also ensures discounts up to 50% for restaurants, gift shops, and tours. The Card has an NFC chip, but it is required from the users to hand fill in the starting date of activation, and sign the card. If the user registers his card on their website, they are guaranteed a replacement in a case card gets lost or stolen. The card can be purchased online and the vouchers can be redeemed in info offices, or it can be purchased directly from the info office, hotel reception, airport, agencies... (Budapestinfo).

Lastly, the Dubrovnik Card offers 24-hour card for 33 euros, 3-day card for 40 euros, and 7-day card for 47 euros. The offer differentiates depending on the time duration of the card. All three products include the free entry on the City Walls, 6 museums, 2 galleries, a

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small guide book, 10% discount in restaurants, souvenir shops and tourist agencies. The one-day card includes the 24-hour bus ticket, 3-day card includes 6 bus rides, and 2 rides for the number 10 bus (suburban line to Cavtat), one museum in Cavtat, and 30% discount on Račić Family Mausoleum, Lokrum Reserve, and Dubrovnik Summer Festival tickets. Finally, the 7-day card offers 10 bus tickets, 4 bus tickets for number 10 bus, museum in Cavtat, 30% discount on Račić Family Mausoleum, Mljet National Park, and 50% discount on Lokrum Reserve, Dubrovnik Summer Festival tickets. Exactly as Budapest card it can be purchased online, and redeemed in the tourist office, or bought directly from one of the sales points (Dubrovnik Card). The comparison is available in the Table 1 in the appendix.

DUBROVNIK: THE DESTINATION

Dubrovnik is a destination in which number of tourist visits is increasing rapidly, with more than 1.5 million of tourists coming to the city each year. According to Karamehmedović (2018), the main tourist motivation to choose Dubrovnik as their holiday destination is visiting cultural heritage and attending the events, followed by relaxing by the sea, and lastly to experience new adventures. During the stay in Dubrovnik tourists seek to learn about the culture, history and heritage of the city, since the historical Old City is inscribed on The World Heritage List (Unesco-ICOMOS, 2015). For that reason, management of Dubrovnik should be focused on providing exceptional level of protection and maintenance of the attractions, as well enable constant improvement in the quality of Dubrovnik as a tourist product, which should lead to sustainability, higher quality of tourism, and lastly to improved quality of life for the citizens.

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

Organization which is responsible for providing the coordination of all activities and services in a destination, as well as planning and promotion of the destination is Destination

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Management Organization (DMO) (Padurean, 2010). In many European countries as Italy, Austria, Greece and Germany DMOs are in control of creating and promoting the tourist offer.

On the contrary, in Croatia the destinations are managed by several organizations divided into four levels: governmental, social, economic, vocational. Out the four categories the leading organization is the Croatian National Tourist Board together with regional tourist offices.

Prompted by the problems in the outdated system, Croatian Ministry of Tourism decided to implement new Law on Tourist Boards which could bring positive effects to Croatian tourism (Brozović, 2016).

According to the Croatian law on tourist boards and promotion of tourism, effective from 1.1.2020. The Tourist Boards are responsible for destination management. A few of their obligations are: planning of the development of the tourist product, communication with the public and private stakeholders within the destination, connecting the destination offer in the packages and products which provide innovative experiences, strategic and operational planning of the tourism development, management of the visitor flows.

In the previous part of the project, the author tried to compile all the relevant data in order to be able to organize the form of the primary research. The focus will be on the methods how the Dubrovnik Card could be improved, and which benefits the improvement would bring to Dubrovnik as a destination.

METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain the purpose of the Senior project a research was conducted through March and April 2020. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of Dubrovnik

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Card in the promotion of Dubrovnik as a destination, and to examine the customer feedback for possible improvements of the product for future use.

Two distinct data collection methods were used; data analysis and a short survey.

For the primary research method secondary analysis of data was chosen. Secondary data analysis is method by which author analyses of data that was collected by someone else for different research purpose (Johnston, 2014). The data analyzed was nonexistent before, thus it was created and released by the „Administrative department for culture and heritage of Dubrovnik “on the request of the author and the mentor of the senior project.

The procedure of getting secondary data had to go through formal authorities. Thus, following the written approval of the Major of the city of Dubrovnik, Mato Frankovic, and several meetings with the head of the department, Tonci Danicic, it has been agreed that the employees of the Dubrovnik Card would collect the data which was necessary to accomplish the research, and provide it for analysis. Furthermore, it has been agreed that upon completion of the senior project, the data will be shared with the above-mentioned authorities.

The data collected refers to the percentage of Dubrovnik Card visitors in the overall total number of museum visits for the years 2018 and 2019, as well as it provides information regarding the sales and revenues from 2010 to 2019, and the percentage of sales by platforms for the year 2019.

The second method used was the electronic survey. It was intended to be carried out among the users of the Dubrovnik Card, but due to the unpredicted situation regarding the Covid-19, such method wasn't accessible. The substitution was to perform the survey among the selling points, considering they are most knowledgeable about the product, as well as familiar with the guest feedback, and reactions.

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The electronic survey was carried out among 28 participants. All participants were the front-line employees who encounter Dubrovnik Card users daily. The participants were selected to represent both private and public sector. Public sector was represented by 13 employees of the Dubrovnik Tourist Board, since they are the only selling point in contact with the guests who bought the product online. To represent the private sector 15 employees of 5- star hotels in Dubrovnik were chosen: Valamar, Adriatic Luxury Hotels, and Sun Gardens. Sample of 5-star hotels was taken into consideration since they hold significant percentage of the sales, and employees are familiar with guests' feedback.

The survey consisted out of 9 statements which examined their satisfaction with the information available on the Dubrovnik Card, quality of the correspondence with the Dubrovnik Card representatives, and their experience with the customer feedback. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with each statement on a 5- point Likert scale. Lastly, respondents were enabled to state their suggestions regarding the improvement of the product, and voice their opinion on the most and least popular benefits Dubrovnik Card provides to its users. The survey is available in the appendix.

LIMITATIONS

The author encountered several limitations to this study. Originally it was planned to focus on the development of the system for improvement of the destination management of Dubrovnik using the Dubrovnik Card, due to the volume of the research, and lack of time such in depth research wasn't possible.

Other limitations are connected to the Covid-19 pandemic, since the author wasn't able to examine the tourists' feedback on the product. As a substitute, the seller points were surveyed.

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In the previous part of the project the author covered procedure, part, and protocol of implementing the research. In the following part the author will represent the results obtained needed for discussion and conclusion.

RESULTS

The obtained results from the secondary analysis of data and the survey conducted among the selling points of Dubrovnik Card both show how efficient is the product, and the benefits it brings to the destination.

With the secondary analysis of data which has been collected by Dubrovnik Card, several results have been enacted.

Foremost, the data enables the reader to see the growth in the sales and revenues of the Card, from the year 2010 when the project has been initiated, up until 2019. As it is visible in the Table 2, there has been a constant rapid increase.

It is show in the Graph 1, how the total number of sales is divided among the private partners, public partners and online channels. The biggest portion of sales, 44% comes from the online channels, which is expected regarding that the price is reduced for 10%. Additionally, out of the total number of 181.501 cards sold during the 2019 the biggest portion of sales goes to the one-day card; 122.948, followed by the three-day card: 49.451, and lastly during the 2019 there has been only 9.102 seven-day cards sold.

Furthermore, data refers to the most and least utilized benefits that the product provides. In the 2019, 98% of cars users have visited the city walls, followed by Franciscan Monastery with 53%, and Cultural Historical museum with 52% visitors.

Only 29% of three day and seven-day card users decided to visit Cavtat, and only 6% of them visited Vlaho Bukovac House while in Cavtat.

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The second highest number of visitors; 31,61% holds the Maritime museum, after which all remaining museums have less than 20% of Dubrovnik Card users visiting them (Table 3).

Although, a smaller percentage of Dubrovnik Card users visit the museums bundled in the product, they still make up the majority of museum goers. According to the monthly data provided by the Dubrovnik Card, in 2019 74% of individual museum visitors have been Dubrovnik Card users. The users of Dubrovnik Card during the year make up to more than 50% of museum visitors, with the exception in the February: when the annual night of museums is taking place. The detailed numbers on museum visits can be seen in the Table 4.

The data obtained using the electronic survey refers to the employee experience regarding the customer feedback, and their overall satisfaction with the Dubrovnik Card.

Out of the sample of 28 participants, out of whom 13 are representatives of public, and 15 are representatives of private selling points 64% are satisfied with the quality of cooperation with the Dubrovnik card representatives, both 18% participants are neutral, and 18% are dissatisfied.

Following, half of the participants are satisfied with the information which is available to them about the card, 35% are neutral, and 14% are dissatisfied; and have stated that guests often complain about the lack of information on the record of the opening hours of the museums that are included in the product, and on the clarity of discounts bundled with the card.

21% of participants have stated that they often receive customer complaints regarding the Dubrovnik Card, 21% are neutral, and 57% of participants state that they don't receive complaints. As it is visible in the Graph 2, the participants who are employees of private sector receive more complaints than the ones in public sector.

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Out of 28 participants 17% are not able to easily resolve customer complaints that occur regarding the card, 53% state that they are able to resolve them, and the rest of the participants are neutral.

The most common complaint private participants receive is that the number of bus rides are limited per card, and the most common complaint public representatives occur with is that the card can be used only per one entrance in the museum. It is interesting that no private representatives have recorded example of such complaint, and only one public representative has mentioned the complaint on bus tickets.

The private representatives are more likely to receive the complaints on the price, and the offer of the card which some customers find irrelevant. It is necessary to take in consideration, that private sellers are more exposed to the customer feedback.

In accordance with the data provided by Dubrovnik Card, employees have observed that guests prefer one-day card, followed with three-day card, as visible in the Graph 3. Despite it, employees have rated one-day card as least beneficial to customer, with the least value for money.

According to the participants of the survey the three-day card is the one providing most benefits, and highest value for money.

Resuming with the benefits, participants have recognized the City Walls as most useful attraction included, together with the bus tickets. They have as well mentioned the value which the bundle itself provides to the customer. Additionally, supporting the data provided by Dubrovnik Card, the most participants have declared the attractions in Cavtat as least popular ones.

On the contrary, their suggestions for improvement of the product were adding more attractions, expanding the offer on Elaphiti islands, and Trsteno.

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Furthermore, they suggested offering the enhanced and more precise information on the usage of the card, and the special offers included. 37% participants believe more bus tickets should be added, especially for the 7-day card. Lastly, participants have suggested implementation of the electronic card. The complete data is available in the appendix.

In the subsequent part of the paper author will discuss the obtained results in the context of improvement of the Dubrovnik Card, and the benefits which could be achieved.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following section of the research paper addresses the solution, in regards to the data collected beforehand. As previously identified, the focus of the research is on the recommendation of methods for improvement of the Dubrovnik Card, and the benefits such improvement would bring to Dubrovnik as destination.

The key characteristics of the destination cards, benefits Dubrovnik Card enables to the users, and the customer feedback have been identified during the primary and secondary research. During the research the author has come across several improvement points, which are going to be discussed further in the text.

Taking into consideration the knowledge acquired writing the introductory part of the paper, secondary analysis of data and the survey feedback, the following conclusions have been reached.

In regards to the evidence gathered in the introduction of the research; none of the cards are offering the duration of the card longer than 120 hours, or 5 days. Furthermore, it has been confirmed by the sales of Dubrovnik Card, that seven-day card is the least preferred by customers- although it is the one providing the most benefits. Thus, the suggestion is that altering the seven-day card to five-day card would create higher meaning to the customers- resulting in higher profits.

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In the primary research it has been discussed that users of city cards prefer using public transport although they have car at disposal. Such behavior creates benefits for the destination, since the car traffic is reduced. Additionally, it redistributes the workload from the bus ticket selling points. One-day Card includes 24-hour bus ticket; however, two other products include a limited number of bus rides, which is one of the main reasons behind the customer confusion and dissatisfaction. As suggested in the conducted survey, offering an unlimited bus rides in the other two cards, modeled on the one-day card would facilitate the usage of the product, decrease dissatisfaction and occurrence of possible problems.

The secondary analysis of data provided by Dubrovnik Card has corroborated the theory by Khun who claims tourist wouldn't have visited as many attractions as they did with using the city card. That brings to an understanding that increasing the number of attractions included, simultaneously increases the value of the product, and the benefits it provides to the destination. It is necessary to take into consideration that it raises the tourist awareness of the attractions available, thus improves their perception of destination. The higher number of attractions would help in dispersion of the tourist from the main attraction- city walls, and create higher revenues to new stakeholders.

According to the primary research, not many card holders opt for visiting the Cavtat, through it should be encouraged considering it would disburden the Old city of Dubrovnik. In order to encourage tourists to visit Cavtat, it is necessary to provide more detailed information referring to how to reach it, and promote the offer included.

It is evident that Dubrovnik Card possesses significant amount of data, which if interpreted accurately is able to bring tremendous value to the DMO of Dubrovnik. In order to generate the biggest amount of data available the product should be adapted technologically, modeled on European city cards. Such cards are able to collect information,

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which can be used to create movement patterns of tourists within a destination, thus enabling the DMO to manage the crowd movements. Additionally, smart cards enable tourist the option of personalization of their experience.

Ideally, the Dubrovnik Card 2.0 would be implemented with software, and a mobile app which the users would download after buying the product online. The app would enable them to create the personalized itinerary of their visit, providing all necessary information regarding the opening times, short description of each attraction, and tips for the best experience. If tourists would pre-register the exact time, they will visit an attraction, they would receive a QR code with which they are able to skip the lines. Furthermore, software would detect the visitor density in the chosen attraction during the time slot, based on which it would suggest the users another, less hustling attraction during the time period.

In summary, the best way to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Dubrovnik Card would be to redesign and add value to the product; creating the Dubrovnik Card 2.0. Such improved product would provide numerous benefits to users, stakeholders and ultimately, could enable the drive of the Destination Management Organization of Dubrovnik on the next level; in a way enabling the new future of Dubrovnik as a well- managed and sustainable destination.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Recommendations for further research are to provide in depth analysis of the primary data collected, in order to trace the patterns of tourist movements and preferences. Further research should focus on the detailed elaboration of the Dubrovnik Card 2.0 model, taking into consideration the tourist feedback.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Card Comparison.

	Barcelona	Amsterdam	Budapest	Dubrovnik
Duration and price	/	24-hour = 65€	24-hour = 22€	24-hour = 33€
	/	48-hour = 85€	48-hour = 33€	/
	72-hour = 46€	72-hour = 105€	72-hour = 43€	72-hour = 40€
	96-hour = 56€	96-hour = 120€	96-hour = 53€	/
	120-hour = 61€	120-hour = 130€	120-hour = 63€	/
	/	/	/	168-hour = 47€
Electronical	YES	YES	YES	NO

Table 2. Growth in the sales and revenues of Dubrovnik Card.

YEAR	AMONUT OF MONEY
2010	1 485 930
2011	3 533 080
2012	5 680 930
2013	8 179 500
2014	12 279 230
2015	13 728 300
2016	14 796 960
2017	22 940 490
2018	25 311 230
2019	44 794 855

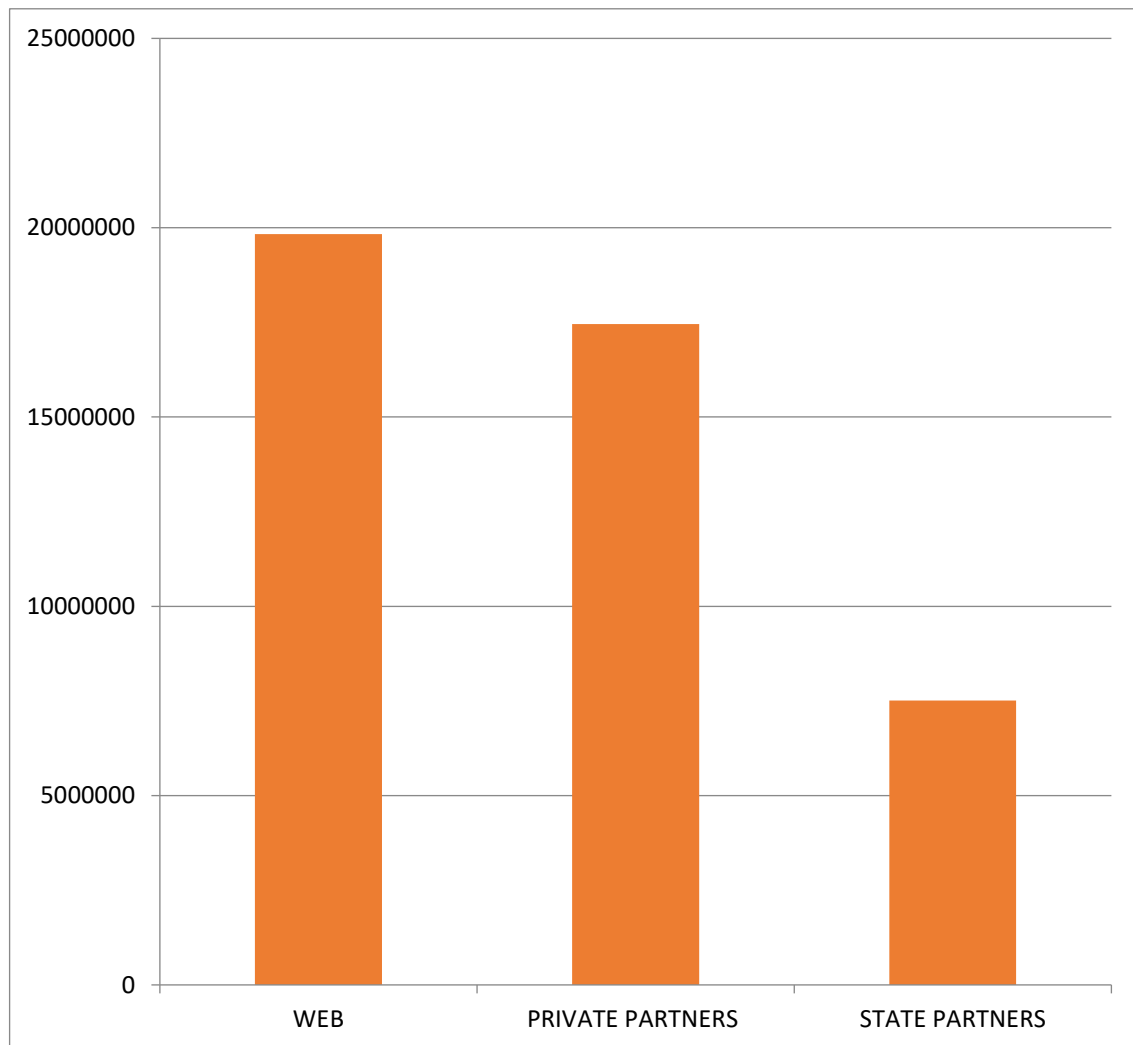
Table 3. Percentage of Dubrovnik Card visitors.

	Dubrovnik Card visitors			
	City Walls	Franciscan Monastery	Cavtat	Vlaho Bukovac House
Total number of visitors	177.921	97.022	18.601	3.754
% of total usage of the card	98%	53%	29%	6%
Number of not utilized cards	3.580	84.479	45.045	59.901
% of not utilized cards	2%	47%	71%	94%

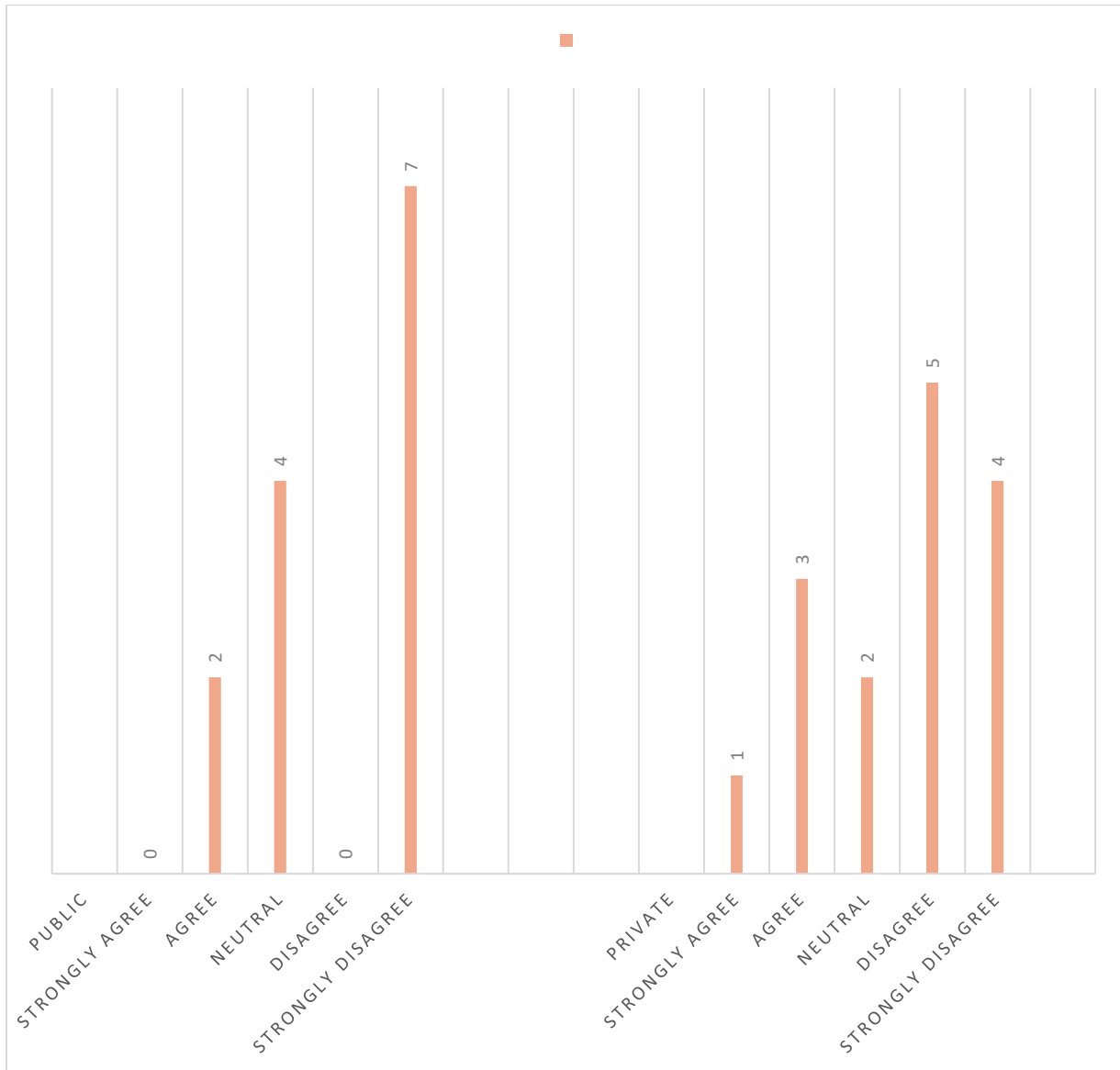
Table 4. Percentage of Dubrovnik Card museum visitors.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF VISITORS	DUBROVNIK CARD VISITORS	TOTAL % OF DUBROVNIK CARD VISITORS
Cultural Historical Museum	140240	95328	67,97%
Maritime Museum	67242	57378	85,33%
Rupe Ethnographic Museum	36210	28649	79,12%
Archaeological Museum	5028	2309	45,92%
Museum of Modern Art	16322	7515	46,04%
Dulčić Masle Punitika Gallery	30271	23727	78,38%
The Punitika Studio	22726	20659	90,90%
Marin Držić House	41641	31503	75,65%
Natural History Museum	33433	23767	71,09%
Total number of visitors	393113	290835	
		74,00%	

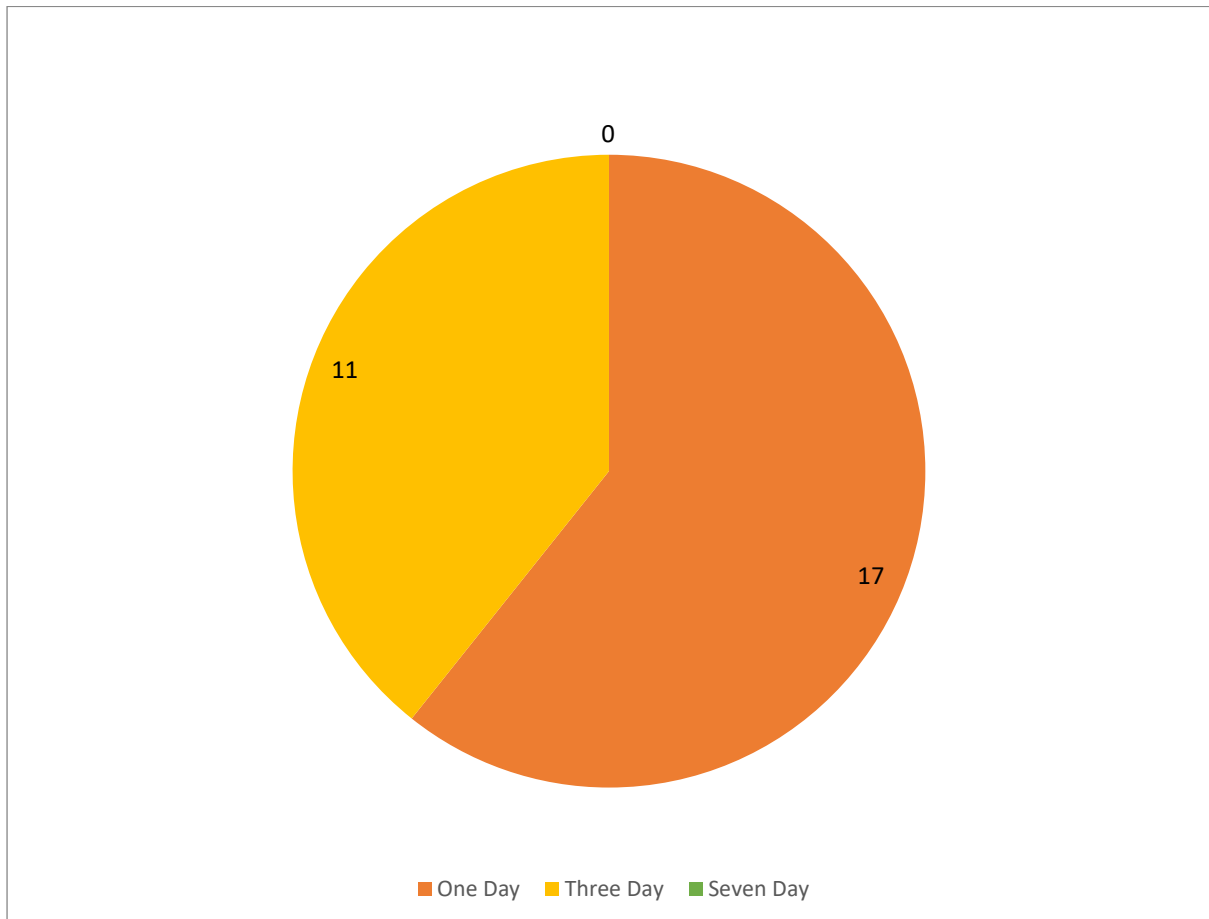
Graph 1. Number of sales divided among the channels.



Graph 2. “Information about Dubrovnik Card is accurate, clear, and available.”



Graph 3. The card most preferred by guests.



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Survey

1) As a selling point for the Dubrovnik Card you represent *

- Private entity (hotels, tourist agencies)
- Public entity (TIC, museums)

2) I am satisfied with the cooperation with the Dubrovnik card representatives. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

3) Dubrovnik Card representatives are always on disposal. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

4) Dubrovnik Card representatives show sincere interest in solving problems. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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5) Information about Dubrovnik Card is accurate, clear, and available. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

6) I often receive guest complaints regarding the Dubrovnik Card. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

7) I am able to easily solve the complaints regarding the Dubrovnik Card. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

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8) Please check the cards based on the benefits to your guests: *

	One-day card	Three-day card	Seven-day card
Best value for money			
The card you find most beneficial			
Most preferred by guests			

9) What is the most common complaint you receive regarding the card? *

10) What is the most useful benefit Dubrovnik Card providing to its guests? *

11) According to you what is the least popular attraction Dubrovnik Card provides? *

12) What would be your suggestion to improve the product of Dubrovnik Card?