



The Learning Area Principles as a Framework for the Creation of Tourism Development Strategy of Novi Sad

Nemanja Davidovic¹

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¹ Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management; Faculty of Sciences; University of Novi Sad; Trg Dositeja Obradovica 3, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia; phone: +381 21 485 2845; fax: +381 21 459 696; e-mail: nemanja.davidovic@dgt.uns.ac.rs ; nemanja.r.davidovic@gmail.com

Supervisors: Prof. dr Olga Hadzic

Institution awarding the Ph. D. Degree: University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation

The goal of this research is to critically evaluate the possibility of a strategic approach to tourism development in Novi Sad (Serbia) by applying the principle of tourism learning area (TLA). The following seven objectives are developed in order to achieve the aim of the study:

1. To provide theoretical explanation and definition of TLA,
2. To identify stakeholders of Novi Sad tourism sector,
3. To examine the characteristics and resources of tourist destination Novi Sad,
4. To conduct an environmental analysis of tourism industry in Novi Sad,
5. To identify learning needs and opportunities of tourist destination Novi Sad,
6. To explore relationship between transformational and transactional leadership,

job satisfaction (JS) and dimensions of a learning organisation (DLO), and

7. To indicate available funds and initiatives to increase the capacity of the destination.

Methodology:

The sample consists of employees from tourism sector. The total number of respondents was 118, out of which 3 were invalid. Therefore, the total number included in this research was 115. The transformational and transactional leadership questionnaire was used in this research (Bass & Avolio, 1990). The transformational leadership questionnaire consists of 11 items that are rated on the 7-point Likert scale (1- totally disagree, 7- completely agree). The transactional leadership questionnaire consists of 4 items with 7-point Likert scale (1- totally disagree, 7- completely agree). Marsick and Watkins (2003) developed

an instrument that diagnoses the current status of learning within an organisation. The instrument that allows this is the Dimensions of the Learning Organisation Questionnaire-DLOQ. In this research, the full version of the questionnaire was used, consisted of 43 items with a 6-point Likert scale (1-almost never, 6-almost always). This instrument has proved to have a great value in use for both academic and practical purposes. The data was collected using standard pen and paper procedure, as well using electronic questionnaire with support of Google Documents Survey. The collected data was mined and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows Release 17.0.0. The research has been conducted on the territory of City of Novi Sad.

Results:

The research conducted in this doctoral dissertation has expanded the concept of learning culture beyond the borders of USA and suggests that it is not a phenomena specific only for the West. The tourism stakeholders have been identified using stakeholder matrix method. Investments in tourism industry in Novi Sad have increased in the past ten years, especially in hospitality sector. The number of tourist bed nights and arrivals is in recovery process from the crisis of 2008. The number of foreign tourist arrivals is increasing, whereas the number of domestic tourist arrivals is decreasing. TOWS analysis has generated two potential tourism development strategies: mini-mini or maxi-mini strategy. Dimensions of Learning Organisation Questionnaire (DLOQ) was translated and adapted so that it could be used with Serbian-speaking populations. Serbian version of DLOQ revealed similar or better characteristics in terms of statistical properties to the original. Using DLOQ instrument, organisations can determine their level of organisational development and learning culture, diagnose problems and offer solutions. Correlation analysis has proven positive correlation between JS, transformational leadership, transactional leadership and all DLOs. JS is a correlation mediator between transformational leadership and DLO in only three of seven dimensions (*Create continuous learning opportunities-*

individual level, Encourage collaboration and team learning- team level and *Create systems to capture and share learning-* organisational level). In all other factors of DLO, the transformational leadership factor has not lost its impact. It is shown that in most cases the interpretation of the individual dimensions of DLOQ instrument had a high degree of compatibility with the characteristics of transformational leadership, so that the impact of this factor is not diminished. It is partly confirmed (in five of seven dimensions) that JS is a correlation mediator between transactional leadership and DLO. The two dimensions where it has not been confirmed are *Create continuous learning opportunities* - individual level and *Create systems to capture and share learning* - organisational level. In these dimensions, the exchange process between leaders and followers (cost-benefit) is emphasized. In the assessment of organisational culture among tourism stakeholders, travel agencies and tour operators score above the industry average, and public sector and educational institutions score below the industry average.

Theoretical conclusions:

Results of this doctoral dissertation are a step towards improving the theoretical understanding of new areas of research in the tourism industry. It has defined and separated the topics of organisational changes, organisational learning (also known as organisational development), learning organisation and learning area. The results presented extend existing theoretical knowledge of the DLO among tourism stakeholders in Novi Sad and its surroundings. The issues discussed throughout the presented work should bring us closer understanding of the principles TLA, as a process that goes from the individual-employee who learns to the level of the team, the organisation and all the macro-level regions. The dissertation has clearly laid the conceptual research model that can successfully be applied to other spatial and conceptual areas.

Practical application of the dissertation:

The concept of a TLA is a multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral approach to problem solving in

order to improve the performance of micro, small and medium enterprises and human resources of tourism on the destination level. This approach involves many stakeholders at the destination level. A well-structured TLA can provide the continuous information, training and learning processes needed in our modern European knowledge-based economy. This has a direct positive impact on the growing competitiveness of human resources in the labour market, the promotion and development of entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability. It is recognized by the EU, and today there are funds and initiatives for strengthening the capacity of tourist destinations. Many of these funds are available to Novi Sad as a tourist destination, and can be used in the initial stages of establishing a TLA.

Content of the dissertation (including abstracts of all chapters):

Abstract of chapter one

The introduction defines the problem and the subject of research, the goals and tasks of research, methodology and scientific contribution of the doctoral dissertation.

Abstract of chapter two

The second chapter presents the theoretical definition of the TLA concept. The process of globalization is clearly described, as well as the position of tourism in this process. In a historical overview it theoretically grounded the TLA concept.

Abstract of chapter three

The third chapter begins by showing the precise origin, development and current state of the knowledge economy. The following section explains in detail the differences between formal education, non-formal education and informal learning. The concept of knowledge management is clarified in detail by a number of definitions of various authors. Furthermore, organisational changes are classified by cause, content and process of change. Special attention was paid to the model of the life cycle of the destination and connection of this model with the BCG portfolio matrix, the life cycle of the tourism product and organisational politics. In addition to this, chapter provides an overview

of best practices example of learning areas in Germany.

Abstract of chapter four

This chapter gives a detailed roadmap towards the establishment of a TLA. It is presented in three phases, with specific actions in each stage, which is an important innovation in the transfer of scientific results into practical application.

Abstract of chapter five

Identification of tourism stakeholders in Novi Sad presents the results of the first phase of the research. Stakeholders were identified using stakeholder matrix analysis, after which they were transferred to the dynamic driving wheel of tourism stakeholders in TLA.

Abstract of chapter six

The structure and flow of information among stakeholders is the next logical step in further research. The sixth chapter deals with the stakeholder cooperation model, ways of communication and interaction level among stakeholders.

Abstract of chapter seven

The focus of the seventh chapter is on characteristics of Novi Sad as a tourist destination. Analysis of the material base and the tourist flow are supported by the most recent statistical data. This includes the development of tourist destination, the scope and structure of tourism trends, seasonality and comparison with other European cities.

Abstract of chapter eight

This chapter analyses the external and internal environment using EFAS (External Factors Analysis Summary), IFAS (Internal Factors Analysis Summary), and SFAS (Strategic Factors Analysis Summary) matrix. Special significance of this chapter is that this approach has not been used in tourism. Environmental analysis of tourist economy of Novi Sad is the first necessary step in the development of the strategy. The results are then transferred to the TOWS matrix in order to generate alternative strategies.

Abstract of chapter nine

This is a central chapter of dissertation, where the conceptual model it tested by investigating the impact of leadership style and JS on the DLO. The applied methodology is explained, starting from the definition of constructs of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, DLO and instruments for their measurement, as well as demographic variables. The results of primary research are presented, analyzed and interpreted regarding the following: information on the sample, the properties of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis where the dependent variable is one of the dimensions of learning organisations and independent variables are transformational leadership and job satisfaction, the regression analysis in which the dependent variable is one of the dimensions of learning organisations, and independent variables are transactional leadership and job satisfaction and evaluation of the value of a learning organisation culture.

Abstract of chapter ten

The tenth chapter shows the available funds and initiatives to increase the capacity of the destination, thus the results of this dissertation can be applied to many projects. The chapter provides useful guidelines for the transfer of scientific data in practice.

Abstract of chapter eleven

The conclusion presents the most significant results in all parts of the dissertation. The research results are presented clearly and in detail, the pre-defined goals and objectives, and are accompanied by adequate contributions to

the chapter. Three hypotheses were confirmed, one is partially upheld, and one denied.

Abstract of chapter twelve

The bibliography reviews the literature and other sources of information which were used during the preparation of the doctoral dissertation.

Abstract of chapter thirteen

Appendices include instruments to measure leadership style, DLO, JS and interpretation of DLOQ instrument.

Acknowledgments

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