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All at Sea: Sustaining Livelihoods through Maritime Tourism in Croatia

Abstract

This paper explores the development of maritime tourism activities undertaken by a Seafaring Croatian community, largely in response to changing economic circumstances. Empirical data gathered in May 2013 from narrative stories given by boat Captains and questionnaires underpin the case study. The paper argues that in studying community livelihoods, the historical context of that community is an important factor in determining the success of tourism development and any policy formation and intervention. The sustainable livelihoods framework provides the bases for assessing the potential for success. The five factors of SL approach (financial capital, human capital, physical and social aspect, and natural capital) have proved to be an essential framework and toolkit for tourism development in the observed community. Despite evident on-going challenges, maritime tourism activities provide a commercially viable way of life in this community.

Keywords: sustainable livelihoods, maritime tourism, seafaring community, entrepreneurship, Croatia

Introduction

Coastal and maritime tourism, representing over one third of the European maritime economy, is the largest maritime activity in Europe. It employs around 3.2 million people, generating €83 billion in gross value added (European Commission, 2014). The Blue Growth Strategy identified coastal and maritime tourism as one of five areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs. In order to capitalise on the employment potential of maritime tourism, there is a recognised need to invest in human capital by promoting and developing skills for the sector. This is one of the central aims of the European Strategy for Coastal and Maritime Tourism (European Commission, 2014).

Given the opportunities for skill development and employment opportunities, the 'blue economy' is featuring more widely in European policy making. Comprising of a range of economic activities, those relevant to tourism include coastal tourism, yachting and marinas,

passenger ferry services and cruise tourism (Pinto, Cruz & Combe, 2015). Whilst much of the policy development has centred on marine clusters, there is an appreciation of the value of a regional development approach that takes account of and capitalises on regional variations and strengths (Pinto, et al., 2015).

Set against a background of interest in the potential of maritime tourism to create jobs, this paper discusses a specific coastal region of Croatia, a country with a well-developed and successful maritime tourism sector. Specifically, it explores the historical context of the development of maritime tourism activities undertaken by a seafaring Croatian community, largely in response to changing economic circumstances. A decline in the traditional employment of the region led the community to seek ways to make a living from maritime tourism which, despite continued challenges, remains a commercially viable way of life.

This paper adopts a historical perspective to uncover the foundations of a livelihood, in this case based around maritime tourism development. It highlights that an entrepreneurial spirit and an existing skill base enabled a community to sustain a livelihood from maritime tourism without outside intervention or policy implementation. It argues that in studying community livelihoods the historical context of that community is an important factor in determining the success of tourism development and any policy formation and intervention.

The historical perspective is essentially concerned with understanding a subject in light of its earliest phases and subsequent evolution. It clarifies the historical context of a range of issues, using the past to understand the present (Lawrence, 1984). Adopting a historical perspective means understanding the social, economic, intellectual and emotional settings that shaped people's lives and actions in the past (Carnegie & Napier, 1996). The historical perspective in tourism is not new, and the application of this perspective to study the evolution and development of tourism has been fully reviewed by (Page & Connell, 2014). They indicate a number of themes that take a historical approach, including the rise of the package holiday and mass tourism (Bray & Raitz, 2001), the emergence of pleasure travel as a distinct activity (Walton, 2009), the rise of tourism in specific places (Durie, 2003) and the cultural history of tourism and holiday making (Löfgren, 2002). More recently, Antonesau and Stock (2014) use a geo-historical perspective to reconstruct the globalisation of tourism. However, beyond these historical studies the historical perspective is a neglected approach in tourism research.

Crouch and Perdu (2015) confirm this deficiency in the recent review of disciplinary foundations of tourism research.

Literature Review

Sustainable livelihoods

The concept of a 'sustainable livelihood' is not new as it has been mentioned in the literature since the 1990's (Morse, McNamara & Acholo, 2009). A commonly used definition of a livelihood and its sustainability originates from Chambers and Conway in 1992.

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers & Conway, 1992:7).

The sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) to development intervention has at its heart putting people at the centre of development, making people rather than resources as the priority concern (Morse, et al., 2009). SLA is a multi capital approach in which sustainability is considered in terms of available capital. (1998) identifies five capitals: natural, social, physical, economic or financial, and human capital as presented in Figure 1.

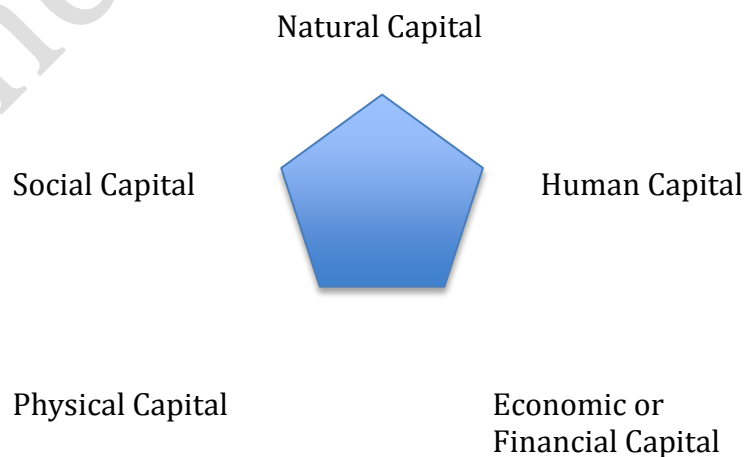


Figure 1: The five capitals of sustainable livelihood (Scoones, 1998; cited in Morse, McNamara and Acholo, 1999).

Natural capital concerns the natural resource stocks (soil, water, genetic resources etc.) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks etc.). Social capital refers to the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations). Physical capital comprises infrastructure (buildings, roads), production equipment and technologies. Economic or financial capital is the capital base (cash credit/debt, savings and other economic assets) and, the human capital includes skills, knowledge, labour (including good health and physical capability).

The sustainable livelihoods approach is a relatively recent development in tourism studies, which is surprising given its attributes. As stated by Wu and Pearce (2014), the SLA offers both a holistic framework and a practical toolkit to analyse the impacts of tourism and interactions within a community. The approach allows for the multi-sectorial character of life and acknowledges the importance of integrating environmental, social and economic issues into a holistic framework (Lee, 2008; Tao & Wall, 2009). A review of the body of tourism work that utilises the sustainable livelihood approach or concepts is beyond the scope of this paper and has been expertly acknowledged elsewhere (Kokkranikal & Morrison, 2011; Tao & Wall, 2009; 2011; Wu & Pearce, 2014). It can be observed that the contexts are diverse (Clarke & Carney, 2008) and include pro-poor tourism (Ashley, 2000; Mbaiwa & Stronzab, 2010); the use of SLA as an analytical tool (Mbaiwa & Sakuze, 2009; Shen, 2009; Snyder & Sulle, 2011; and Tao & Wall, 2009), and its relationship with conservation (Stone & Nyaupane, 2015; Sebele, 2010; Hughes, 2013; Mustika, Birtles, Everingham, & March, 2013; Snyman, 2012; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013).

Two articles in particular offer developments in our understanding of sustainable livelihoods in tourism and provide the rationale for considering sustainable livelihoods in the context of maritime tourism activities for a community in Croatia. Firstly, Kokkranikal and Morrison (2011) explore the role of entrepreneurial innovation in facilitating community networks and sustaining livelihoods in tourism; secondly Wu and Pearce (2014) in a critique of the SLA argue that starting with understanding people's aspirations for the tourism sector could be a useful way forward. Both studies maintain the central value of human capital in the SLA. In line with Petersen and Pedersen (2010), Wu and Pearce (2014:441) state that "development

should start with an analysis of people's aspirations for specific livelihoods, as the background for considering livelihood portfolios".

This paper argues that both of these aspects sit within, and are shaped by, the historical context. In the community observed in this research the boat owners who turned to tourism in times of changing economic circumstances in Croatia can be viewed as entrepreneurs who played a vital catalytic role in developing tourism in this area, which has also facilitated the survival of the traditional small shipyards, their skilled labour and their families, as well as preserved farming and fishing. In terms of aspirations this resonates with their strong ambition to maintain the values of a specific livelihood – in their case to continue to make a living from the sea for generations of their families.

Maritime tourism

There is no precise definition of 'maritime tourism' Diakomihalis (2007). In broad terms maritime tourism is closely related to coastal tourism but extends to include all tourist activity deriving from the sea: such as deep-sea fishing and cruising (Hall, 2001). However defined, the relationship between marine based travel and tourism has a developed literature both in terms of transport related research as in the case of passenger ferries, or where the marine context is the main tourist experience (Page, 2009; Bowen, Fidgeon & Page, 2014). Perhaps the fastest growing body of literature relates to cruise tourism, including issues of sustainability and responsibility (Hritz & Cecil, 2010; Klein, 2011); passenger behaviour (Lester & Weeden, 2004), residents perceptions (Brida, Chiappa, Meledda & Pulina, 2012), and environmental impacts (Howitt, Revol, Smith, & Rodger, 2010; Carić & Mackelworth, 2014). Nautical tourism has also received attention by Luković (2013).

Within the broad definitions of maritime tourism, one aspect that has relevance for this research is maritime tourism. Often viewed as a form of special interest tourism, there is no accepted definition for yachting tourism but rather terms such as nautical tourism, marine or marina tourism and leisure boating are commonly used (Mikulić, Krešić & Kožić, 2015). Yachting tourism therefore can be taken to include staying on smaller boats for tourism purposes with or without a defined itinerary. Although as outlined by Mikulić et al., (2015), the literature specifically on yachting tourism is scarce, the dominant issues and debates from the literature relate to the various impacts of this type of activity. These include for example

the degradation of the environment caused by small craft (Davenport & Davenport, 2006; Lloret, Zaragoza, Caballero & Riera, 2008), greenhouse gas emissions from marine tours (Byrnes & Warnken (2006), the stress this type of tourism causes to the local community (Lück, 2007), and economic impacts (Diakomihalis & Lagos, 2008). Yachting tourism is also shown to have a number of benefits, for example Silveira and Santos (2012) identify that the development of yachting tourism in Horta Marina in the Azores engendered a sense of identity and pride amongst the community, thus generating benefits other than economic ones. Horak further (2013) offers a discussion of the demand for nautical yachting tourism in Croatia.

What is lacking from the research relating to yachting tourism is its role as a provider of employment and as a means to develop human capital through skill development. Given the focus of the European Commission on exactly this issue, the research presented here is timely in that it explores a community that has exploited the employment opportunities generated by the sector.

Research Context

Tourism in Croatia

The development of tourism in Croatia has a long, complex and often difficult history which is associated with its changing political ideologies and economic circumstances. A review of this history is beyond the scope of this paper and has been expertly covered elsewhere (see for example Hall, 2003 and Jordan 2000).

In 2015 Croatia registered 12.7 million international tourist arrivals and 71.5 million overnight stays (CBS, 2016). The share of the Split-Dalmatia County in the total tourist overnights accounts for 18.6%. Although Croatia is internationally recognized for its long Adriatic coastline and its 1,246 islands, islets and rocks (Dupalčić Leder, Ujević, & Čala, 2004) with exceptional potentials for all types of activities at sea, Croatia used nautical tourism relatively modestly (Vukonić, 2005). However, in terms of the tourism product, yachting or nautical tourism has long been a feature of tourism on the coast. Until 1983 the Croatian nautical offer consisted of unconnected, spontaneous actions aimed at increasing the

numbers of sea berths in the existing harbours and at constructing marinas (Vukonić, 2005, p.174). The political system in ex-Yugoslavia did not favour private entrepreneurial activities and therefore individual initiatives were highly restricted. However, following the independence of Croatia and after the end of Homeland War (1995) the recovery of tourism in Croatia was rapid. Due to the change of the political system as well as to the support for entrepreneurial activities from the Croatian government, nautical tourism development significantly intensified. Nautical tourism has become part of the mass product since the late 1990s. Figures indicate that in 2001 there were 75 registered charter companies in Croatia which provided 14,000 vessels catering yearly for around 150,000 tourists (Croatian National Tourist Board, 2001, cited in Hall, 2003). However, according to the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure the number of registered charter companies in 2014 increased to 1,906 (but only 645 have been active). The total number of active charter vessels was 3,305 accommodating 347,093 tourists who realised 2.4 million overnights.

There are 121 nautical ports on the Croatian Adriatic (70 marinas including 13 land marinas with 17,351 moorings in 2015 (CBS, 2016)). The Split-Dalmatia County has 20 nautical ports, including 12 marinas with 2,290 moorings, thus being the third major nautical destination in Croatia according to the income.

Community under Exploration

The community under study in this research resides around the Port of Krilo in the Parish of Jesenice. The port of Krilo, with the adjoining smaller ports in Bok, Sumpetar and Oriž, belongs to the the Parish of Jesenice which is situated 15 km east of Split.

The 300 year long maritime tradition of Krilo Jenenice is evidenced in 1711 when the Venetian governor of Dalmatia prohibited the inhabitants of Poljica to fish sardines in the waters around Split. During the 19th century, alongside the fishing boats, there first appeared smaller and then larger boats for transporting agricultural produce (wine, oil and cherries) to Zadar, Rijeka and Trieste. When phylloxera blighted the vineyards, the boats turned to extracting sand at the mouth of the Cetina river and transporting it from Makarska to Zadar and the islands, and especially for the construction business in Split and its surroundings.

In the second half of the 20th century the extraction of sand was restricted and replaced in construction by crushed stone of greater quality, which made the mariners turn increasingly towards offering excursions to tourists and developing nautical tourism.

Today, Krilo Jesenice is known as the port with the highest number of luxury boats for excursions and cruising on the Adriatic (about 130), which makes it the most significant and strongest tourist boat port on the Croatian side of the Adriatic.

Supporting tour operator

The community under exploration in this research operates the majority of its sailing activities in conjunction with I.D. Riva Tours, a tour operating company specialising in inclusive holidays to Croatia. The company was established in 1994 in Munich, Germany and has a sister company in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. In 2015 the companies catered for 88,000 holidaymakers offering a wide product portfolio ranging from standard package holidays based on transportation and hotel or apartment village accommodation, family rooms/apartments in private households or private cottages to cruising on motor sailing boats along Croatian Adriatic including island hopping by bicycles.

The cruising product belongs to a special I.D. Riva Tours holiday brand. The company has 25 privately owned boats under a fixed charter contract with the total capacity of 720 passengers in twin or triple cabins. This means that I.D. Riva Tours creates and promotes the product on the international market and bears the risk of unsold capacities. Captains as owners of the boats are responsible for providing a crew and catering services during the summer season which usually lasts for 22 weeks. This results in approximately 12,500 cruise tourists yearly since the occupancy rate ranges from 82 – 85% (Čavlek, 2013).

Each boat has between 4-5 permanent employees (captain, chef and sailors who act as waiters as well). Thus, during a season there are 110-140 employees on the boats plus the additional 40-50 staff in the harbours (cleaners, tourist guides and tour-representatives, etc.), as well as family members who do not sail but take care of supply services and/or administrative part of the job at home.

Payment to the boat owners by I.D. Riva Tours is arranged partially in advance, and the remainder follows at the end of each cruise. Although contracts are signed only for the duration of one season and need to be renewed every year, thus allowing the captains full freedom of distribution channel choice, there is significantly great loyalty of captains to I.D. Riva Tours. This might be explained by the fact that the company is developing the product together with captains' families, allowing them loans under special terms for necessary reconstructions of their boats as well as for building the new ones. This secures stronger partnership ties and allows captains' families to keep their business tradition, which has been running now for three generations. At the same time I. D. Riva Tours demonstrates its corporate social responsibility by not only treasuring family business traditions, but also by helping to preserve the finest and handsomest traditional wooden motor boats on the Adriatic and by revitalising the shipyard with tradition that is over three centuries old (Čavlek, 2013).

Research methods and data collection

Case studies are a commonly used approach to research, and are identified as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009, p.18). Whilst single case studies are often criticised for lack of rigor, the merits of case study research are well documented, one strength being that they can be used in a variety of different contexts (Denscombe, 2010). In this research, the case used is representative, i.e. it is used to represent a particular phenomenon where the findings may potentially be applied to other individuals or situations (Yin, 2009).

The research adopts a mixed methods methodology, which implies studies that make use of both quantitative and qualitative research with a single study (Bryman, 2007). Arguably, mixed methods utilise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Barbour, 2008). However, despite their practical benefits, mixed methods have received much criticism; one of the most commonly discussed being the unsuitability of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods (Bryman, 2007) due to the differences in their philosophical underpinnings (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Although this is certainly a valid criticism, using mixed methods enabled the researchers to utilise the

opportunities that were presented, and are explained below. The limitations of the approach and data collection methods are a recognised limitation of the present research.

The data collection for this research took part in two stages, and comprised of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The first stage was the qualitative element that gathered narrative stories from three boat captains (Čavlek, 2013). Narrative stories were used as they focus on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell (Riessman, 2008). They are based on experiences and stories rather than opinions and perceptions. A narrative inquiry implies a general approach that views the individual within their social environment and in everyday situations in which they occur (Moen, 2006; Bamberg, 2010), and they are commonly used in historical perspective (Clandinin, 2004). Riessman (1993) outlines that narrative interviews provide the researcher with an insight into the manner in which the study participants make sense of their everyday lives through their storytelling, which fits with the historical approach. Narrative interviewing allows respondents to impose order and flow in the discussion in a way that to them makes sense of events and actions in their lives Riessman (1993). To date, narrative inquiry has received scant attention in the tourism literature, due largely to it being a time consuming and intensive data collation method (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). It also requires detailed transcribing and data analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The narrative stories of this study were collected from three boat captains (identified as A, B, and C) during a week long study tour in May 2013. Two interviewers facilitated the storytelling from the captains. Both of the interviewers were present throughout the duration of the study tour as participants.

The second stage of data collection was a quantitative questionnaire, given out to all 21 boat captains working for I.D. Riva Tours at their annual meeting with the Managing Director and several staff members from Munich at the end of the season at which one of the researchers was present. The gathering was organised in Prague as I.D. Riva Tours organises an incentive/team building trip for captains and their spouses at the end of each season. This is an occasion where the Managing Director presents the performance of the past season, awards the best performers, encourages all to make plans for further improvements and discusses challenges they might be facing in the coming season. The invitation to the event provided an opportunity for the researchers to collect further details on the issues that had emerged from

the narrative interviews. Although the small number of questionnaires does not allow for any meaningful quantitative analysis, it allows for an indication as to the extent to which the experiences of our three captains was replicated elsewhere in the community, and therefore was considered a worthwhile data collection activity. The questionnaire comprised of six sections: profile, their role as captain, family and support networks, the skills needed to do the job, challenges and rewards, and their views on the tourism business.

Findings

Narrative stories

The questioning commenced by asking how long the captains had been making a living from the sea. In each case, the answer was ‘all of our lives’, and from this it transpired that each of the captains are third generation mariners.

Captain A explained that livelihoods in the region for many years have centred around the sea at Krilo Jesenice (near Split).

“The story goes that at the end of the 19th century, our people turned to the Sea. Legend says that a priest told his parishioners to turn to the sea – it is the source of life. This was a turning point for shipbuilding in our town. Our grandfathers were all in the business of sea transportation, we transported our own goods and everyone else’s. In other parts of the region people who were not doing transport built boats, but in 1948 nationalisation destroyed those places – taken over by the government. They put a limit of 50 tonnes on the size of the boats that a private person could own and use for business. In the 1950s dredging improved the business in Krilo Jesenice due to its proximity to the river mouth where sand accumulates. The sand business was active until the 90’s when new construction materials replaced sand. Since tourism had risen in that part of Croatia in the early 70s the shift was logical although very gradual.”

Captain B reports:

“My grandfather was transporting wine, olive oil etc. He sailed at the end of the 30s, and was the first to install an engine in his boat. In 1940 that boat sank during the war but my granddad was OK! My father was poor, and in 1962 he bought the first small boat and carried cargo. At the beginning of 1970s he started doing day trips for tourists. I used to help

my father with these trips in the summer from the age of 7. I could have been a captain from the age of 15, but my father wouldn't allow it so I went to naval technical schools. In 1985 I graduated in naval seafaring, did army duty, and my father and brother bought a boat for tourists in 1987 adapted it for daily excursions”.

Captain C said:

“My family history is like the other two; cargo, sand dredging and now tourism. I am the first in my family involved in the tourism business. My great grandfather had a huge vineyard and orchard. In 1904 he had his first boat. Same story. The tradition in my family before the Second World War. My father had a boat which was employed by the partisan movement in Šibenik in 1945. The boat was sunk and 28 people died, but my father survived. Father got another boat in 1953 and continued to work on dredging sand. As I got older, I started my own dredging. At that age I had a family – six children – and saw the sand business was going down. I reconstructed the boat for the tourism excursion market in 1974 – 79. The sand business got worse so I had a boat constructed to fit the new times. At that time I worked from Dubrovnik for the Globtour travel agency until the begging of the war in Croatia in 1991. I.D. Riva was founded in 1994 and I have been working with them since 1995.”

This line of inquiry asked the captains to talk about the family involvement in the tourism business and what support networks they have. Evidently large family involvement in the business is common.

Captain A works with his three sons on two boats, and his wife stays at home. His 80 year old father also helps out. Captain B works alone as his children are too young. However, his sons will take over. Several members of the family are involved (uncle and brother).

For captain C it is a truly family business. His three brothers are all in the same business and his wife is in procurement. She does the organisation, financial business and paperwork. Other family members (sisters and daughters) bring food to the boats to help out. Across all three boats that the family own, around 20 people are involved. He now feels his daughters and sons have better boats than his! Captain C: “We pass the boats on: when I get my new boat this one will go to my third brother”.

There was also a comment about the other employment of others businesses that are kept going by the maritime tourism activity. Captain A employs a cook and a waiter. “My first concern is the sailing – and the waiter does hospitality.” And from captain B: “The boats are serviced in the winter, so actually keeping small shipyards alive in Croatia’s southern Adriatic.”

The captains also discussed the support received from each other, which they called ‘their other family’. Captain A: “We learn from each other, we are a group that supports each other”.

Captain B “there is no selfishness – things are shared. The village and our community are too small to do things on our own, so everyone has to pitch in. It is positive rivalry”.

The rhetoric was very much about a shared history and common identity. The captains come from families that have been in the region for many years and had all made livelihood from the sea, first as traders and in transportation, then sand dredging, and now from the yachting tourism.

The captains were then guided by the researchers to discuss this transition to tourism, how they had to adapt, and what they had to learn when first becoming involved with tourists. All the captains had graduated from technical colleges but none had specific tourism or hospitality skills. Nevertheless, they recognise the importance of many skills and competences that are immanent to tourism and hospitality business.

Captain A. “You have to know everything – languages, hotel industry, living on sea, marine life, skills concerned with the sea, the hospitality business, electronics, machine engineering, a little bit of everything, also electricity!”

Captain B. “You couldn’t do it without languages. Italian, English, German. For this job, in addition to the boat, the things you need are cleanliness, good food and kindness of the crew. You have to learn about good food and communication just like in any tourism business.”

Captain C. “All kinds of knowledge – licences for captain, engineers, steering, licence – you acquire it with the school, or years of practice. Tourism and hospitality skills also. You also

need to have an innate aptitude – tourism needs a kind approach. In addition to being seaman, we have to be hospitality professionals. This is very important. In tourism you work for people and you have to provide more and more. Languages, German most importantly, but also I learned English, German and Italian through my work. Most important is that when the guest gets off the boat that they are not disappointed. They saved through the winter to come on holidays and it is really important that they are satisfied”.

The researchers then asked the captains to reflect on the challenges they face in running their businesses.

Captain A discussed the issues related to increased competition and regulation. “The biggest problem is to find a place in port because the number of boats have doubled. Administration has also increased, there is lots of paperwork. The biggest expense is fuel”.

Captain B. “I wonder what will happen when Croatia enters the EU? Competition I am sure will increase. I worry about local taxes, and the company we work with. Without them it would be very hard, it gives security. My uncle tried to work on his own, but went bankrupt. The best arrangement is when we take care of boat and the agency takes care of the business.”

Captain C said: “The authorities are a big problem. The port authority gives us so much grief. Also, my big concern is that I have a good start in the season and that the clients are satisfied. Number one requirement is to bring the guests back and WOM advertising is the best.”

Set against the challenges, the captains reflected on what they like about their way of life.

Captain A. “My love for the sea. To be able to continue what I inherited from previous generations. The boat is number one for me”.

Captain C. “If I do the job well, it is nice to make people happy. If I didn’t like it I wouldn’t be doing it. The best bit is when a guest really thanks me.”

From the discussion on the ‘way of life’ it became clear that the captains were keen to discuss how things had changed over the years. They each talked at great length about the sense of tradition.

Captain A. “The first holiday boats were built in the 1950s, they were very small for a few passengers wanting to experience ‘outdoor/rustic’ way of life...” Captain B: ‘Yes, mainly German hippy tourists. No rooms, communal sleeping.’ Captain C: “This was perfect for us, as for Croatians at this time, private ownership of goods was not allowed, but you could own a small boat, a traditional wooden boat. So we could take tourist around and make money. Ownership of larger boats was not allowed”.

Captain A. “We used to go along the coast, no air conditioning, barbecues on the beaches. It was simpler and the guests were happier. Now we have to dock at official marinas. Nowadays you can’t light a fire because of regulations. The piers have been renovated by public money and there are rules.”

Captain B. “Customers were only interested in the price and the cabins. Nowadays, guests have changed. They are all about wanting the latest amenities.”

This has led to further investments by the captains and their families, and more business for the Krilo Jesenice shipyard. Almost continuous upgrading and the upgrades have been undertaken whilst still trying to keep the authenticity of the boats.

Captain C. “In 1990’s the boats were upgraded. Cabins were created but with shared facilities, and we tried to keep them looking traditional. From 2000 onwards we had to have private facilities on boats, and in 2013 the first boat had the Internet installed. They still look traditional, but its fake, it is now modern plastics”.

Captain A. “At the end of the season the boats are taken to Krilo Jesenice for refurbishing. Wooden boats are now too expensive and the quality of the wood is not good, they are impossible to finance and time taken to repair them is too long”.

Captain B. “There are also safety guidelines, you have to meet the requirements. If you made a true wooden boat you would not be able to register it as the traditional ways are not considered safe. For example, for private ship owners all stairs have to be non-flammable. Everything has to be non-flammable, which pushes the costs up.”

Captain C. “The Otac Ivan (his boat) was the first boat on the Adriatic in which every cabin had a toilet. We realised this was the way things were going. Guests always want more. Together with my children, I made the boat Barbara with steel hull, more comfort, bigger cabins, Jacuzzi on deck”. He concluded: “In Krilo Jesenice there is no end, every next boat is more modern than the one before.”

However, there was acknowledgement that change is not always for the best as customers want to see ‘authentic’ boats. Captain B: “I.D. Riva Tours wants wooden sailing boats, and they don’t like the boats without the mast. It is the image.”

Questionnaire Data

To mirror the themes from the narrative interviews the questionnaire data is presented in the same six sections as in the interviews (profile, their role as captain, family and support networks, the skills needed to do the job, challenges and rewards, and their views on the tourism business).

The Captains and Their Livelihoods

The majority of the captains were born in Split (80%), with a further 10% from the island of Rab and 5% from Rijeka and Krilo Jesenice respectively. The oldest captain was 75, and the youngest was 40. The majority (90%) come from families of boat owners and boat workers, and were involved in sectors other than tourism. For 41% of the captains the current boat was in their ownership for 5-10 years and for 23% of them it had been so for 15-20 years. There is evidence of a long standing involvement with the sea, with 30% of the sample having served as captains for 30-35 years, 35% for 20-25 years and 15% for 15-20 years. By far the majority (95%) stated that they anticipated their family members to carry on working in the maritime tourism business in the future.

In terms of the transition to working in maritime tourism, their previous sea faring roles included marine transport, fishing, the extraction of sand and dredging and working on cargo ships. The work for these men (all of the captains are male) is seasonal, lasting for the most part six months per year. For the remaining time the captains are involved in maintaining and

servicing their boats (72%), agriculture (14%), and fishing (9%), or piloting other boats working in dredging (5%).

The questionnaire asked an open question regarding the reasons that captains stated for doing this job. In agreement with the narratives, the reasons included 'the seafaring/maritime tradition', 'family ties to the sea', 'it's a business but also a passion', and 'love of the sea and lifestyle'. Also, the survey showed that the importance of tourism in Croatia was also clearly understood by the captains. They all recognised that the business was providing a living for theirs and many other families, creating demand for domestic products and business opportunities, and presenting economic gain for promoting the country.

Family support networks and community employment

In terms of employment, 11 of the Captains employ 5-7 people, six hire 3-5 people and four had 1-3 people working. All but two captains said that they also had family members working in the business. Of the 19 captains 17 had family members working directly with them, either as chefs, waiters, administrative support, cleaners or as helmsmen. As tours run on a weekly basis (Saturday to Saturday) free time is scarce. Thus, 65% of the captains reported being able to see their families once a week during the season at the end of each trip.

Further evidence of family connections and employment was given in relation to sales of produce to the customers on the boats, of which olive oil (83%), wine (13%), vegetables and fish (6%) were the most common. Also, all Captains had established local suppliers at each of the destinations they sail to, thus ensuring the availability of high quality and affordable local produce.

Skills

In relation to the skills needed to do the job, the captains identified a number of necessary skills. These are shown in Table 1. A five point Likert scale was used, but the results only show two categories as none of the responses fell outside of these.

Table 1 – Skill Requirements

Skill	Somewhat Important n(%)	Very Important n(%)
Seafaring skills	2 (10)	19 (90)
Knowledge of maritime law	6 (29)	15 (71)
To be able to speak some German	9 (43)	12 (57)
To be able to speak some Italian	17 (80)	4 (20)
To be able to speak some English	9 (43)	12 (57)
Financial Skills	12 (57)	9 (43)
Managing Budgets	11 (52)	10 (48)
Boat repair skills	6 (29)	15 (71)
Self reliance	3 (15)	18 (85)
Good humour	8 (38)	13 (62)
Self confidence	12 (57)	9 (43)
Good time management	10 (48)	11 (52)
Negotiation skills	9 (43)	12 (57)
IT/Computer skills	18 (85)	3 (15)
Knowledge of health and safety law and	9 (43)	12 (57)
Managing employee skills	12 (57)	9 (43)
Hospitality and Guest service skills	0 (0)	21 (100)

Aside from the obvious seafaring skills, there was a unanimous agreement that hospitality and guest service skills were of vital importance, as was self-reliance.

Challenges and rewards

In response to an open ended question asking if the captains would recommend working in this business, two contrasting answers summarise the feelings pointedly.

“Yes, if you love the sea, and if you love seeing the smiles of satisfied holiday makers.

“No. It’s a demanding job, you need to be available 24 hours and it’s a very complex business. Without a maritime tradition you would struggle in this job”.

We asked the captains to respond to a list of statements relating to challenges, as shown in table 2. A five point Likert scale was used, but the results only show the four categories as none of the responses fell outside of these.

Table 2: Challenges of operating maritime tourism

Challenge	Disagree n(%)	Neutral n(%)	Agree n(%)	Strongly agree n(%)
Customer expectations changing			17 (77)	5 (23)
Customers becoming more demanding			12 (54)	10 (46)
The cost of boat repairs getting very expensive			11 (50)	11 (50)
Updating boat facilities to meet market demand		2 (10)	10 (45)	10 (45)
Competition for business is increasing		2 (10)	3 (13)	17 (77)
Port authorities are increasing costs			7 (32)	15 (68)
Port authorities present challenges to itineraries	2 (10)		7 (32)	13 (58)
It is hard to access finance (business loans)	4 (18)	2 (10)	10 (45)	6 (27)
Admin and paperwork is increasing			5 (23)	17 (77)
Rising fuel costs are putting pressure on the business	1 (5)	2 (10)	10 (45)	9 (40)
It would be hard to make a living without the connection to I.D.Riva		3 (14)	10 (46)	9 (40)
The seasonal nature of the business causes problems hiring staff	1 (5)	2 (10)	9 (40)	10 (45)
Boat building/repair services are		3 (14)	10 (45)	9 (40)

becoming harder to find				
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Seven captains responded affirmatively to the question regarding whether or not other challenges existed. These included harbour taxes, increased competition from foreign boats, a lack of understanding of European law related to the accession of Croatia to the EU, and no protection of domestic boats from foreign competition. As with the narratives, the rewards were identified as the love of the sea and boats, keeping the maritime tradition of the region and talking to new people and making guests happy.

Discussion

This research presents a case study of a seafaring community in a coastal region of Croatia that turned to maritime tourism in response to changing economic circumstances. From a historical perspective having examined the past in relation to the present it is evident that this community has demonstrated their capability to undertake this transition and to attain a sustainable livelihood. The past proved to be an important consideration as it provides the context for the present and future sustainability of this entrepreneurial activity. Arguably, in order to implement policy or interventions to support the existing situations, the value of the past is that it may offer some indications as to what might be successful. In other words, the context proved to be vital.

The present day situation of this community is the result of a number of different historical factors. Firstly, it is the overall context of the political and economic situation in Croatia. As described elsewhere (Hall, 2003; Jordan 2000) Croatia has undergone a number of challenges that directly affected its current level of development in the broadest sense, and its tourism development. The discussion that came out of this research refers back to the political structure of the time and the effects this had on the economic circumstances of its residents. A clear enabler for the development was access to finance and loans provided by I.D. Riva Tours. This represents the financial capital of the SLA.

The second factor is the skill base of the community. In this region, which is characterised by a long maritime history in trading more distantly and in sand dredging more recently, seafaring skills are commonplace. When the existing need for those skills declined, the choice

is either to re-train, or to find alternative sources for the existing skills. The skill base combined with boat ownership pointed towards tourism as an obvious choice, making this region an ideal area for nautical tourism development. The situation today reflects the new skills that had to be learned, including significantly those relating to hospitality and customer service, and languages. Evidently there was a willingness to learn these skills to benefit from tourism opportunities. This represents the human capital in the SLA.

Thirdly, the community was also ready for maritime tourism in terms of infrastructure to support maritime activities, specifically in relation to boat building and repairs. The current situation indicates that this infrastructure has been rejuvenated by the tourist boat activities. This represents the physical aspect of the SLA.

Fourthly, the situation today reflects the identity and pride of the community in terms of their relationship to the sea. As indicated by the narrative stories and questionnaires, the Sea has a long tradition for providing a means of income in which whole families and communities benefit. It is evident today that this is still the case, with the maritime tourism providing employment opportunities for the wider family, and linkages with other activities such as selling olive oil. These are all important in fostering support for the maritime tourism activity, and represent the social aspect of the SLA.

Finally, the coast provides the environment for the maritime activities representing the natural capital. Thus, maintaining the coastal environment will indisputably be of prime importance in this region.

The evidence provided by our community of a sustainable livelihood resonates with the definition by Chambers and Conway (1992, p. 7)

“A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term”.

Furthermore, previous work by Kokkranikal and Morrison (2011) points towards the role of entrepreneurs in sustainable livelihoods as well as Wu and Pearce's (2014) recognition of both the influence of culture and politics, and the role of aspirations. These features stated by the quoted authors are apparent in this context.

In exploring the seafaring community from Croatia's Adriatic coast who appear to have achieved a sustainable livelihood through maritime tourism, this article advocates studying the past in order to help understand the present. In the context of developing sustainable tourism activity and livelihoods, it is apparent that initiatives are more likely to yield success if policies and interventions are relevant to the context. The SLA has proved to be a useful framework and toolkit for tourism development as shown in the interactions of the five captains and people at the centre of its development at the heart of its approach. An assessment of the historical context could be a useful starting point to lay the foundations of the approach and a possible indication of its potential success.

The study has shown to be timely as it has relevance for the European Union's policy aimed at pursuing the development of maritime tourism for job creation and skill development. It has demonstrated that assessment and sensitivity to the regional context is imperative for success and has relevance to understanding the relationship between tourism and sustainable development. Where Wu and Pearce (2014) advocate beginning with aspirations, we would add that it is imperative to begin with the historical context. We also support Kokkranikal and Morrison's (2011) value placed on the role of entrepreneurs. The paper contributes to recognising the value in applying the historical method in tourism studies and narrative stories as a research method. Both are presently under-utilised and might be able to offer nuanced accounts of livelihoods for future research.

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