

THE LOGISTICS OF A HOTEL

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This chapter addresses the issue of establishing the concept of a dispersed hotel grounded in the principles of sustainability, circular economy, and the reuse of pre-existing resources within a specific community. This represents a novel approach to the development of tourism activities in remote and rural areas, offering a solution to a multitude of challenges that may arise within the local environment. The chapter highlights the key advantages of the dispersed hotel as a tourism development concept when compared to the traditional hotel as an accommodation establishment. Furthermore, the chapter explores the various phases involved in the establishment of the dispersed hotel concept, among which the most pivotal phase can be identified as the concrete steps necessary for the implementation of the dispersed hotel concept within the local community.

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1 Introduction

Planning the development of tourism in a particular area today is a significant challenge. This is especially true for places that are far from the main traffic flows, larger cities, infrastructure and resources that are necessary for the smooth implementation of tourist activities. On the other hand, planning the development of tourism that follows the guidelines of the concept of sustainable development can bring significant benefits to all groups of stakeholders. One of the options, and an important alternative to mass forms of tourism, is the development of green forms of tourism, which, considering a number of criteria, the views of all stakeholders and, last but not least, protection and development criteria, can contribute to the sustainability of a location as a tourist destination.

An important element of sustainable tourism development is the authenticity of the tourist experience. This means offering preserved architecture, intangible heritage, connecting traditional events, and various culinary, educational, sports and other events, in which the local population is necessarily included. Connecting authenticity with green forms of tourism, with on the one hand the homely qualities of the local population, and the revitalization and sustainable development of rural areas on the other, constitutes a challenge that can be solved through offering different, innovative tourist products that include green tourism practices (Cucari et al., 2019). One possible solution is the dispersed hotel model, which we will present in more detail below.

2 Definition of the term »dispersed hotel«

Below we will define the term "dispersed hotel". We will present the basic theoretical foundations of the concept, compare a hotel and a dispersed hotel, and briefly present the key advantages of introducing dispersed hotels, which bring simultaneous benefits to everyone (stakeholders, local population, tourists, environment).

2.1 Hotel or dispersed hotel?

The word hotel comes from the French language (hôtel) and defines »large, luxurious buildings with vestibules and ceremonial halls that served as residences for the nobles of the city«. Since the beginning of the 18th century, the word has taken on a new meaning and defines larger, modern inns, the central focus of which is the hotel rooms, which occupy most of the hotel building (Lebe, 2013).

The development of modern tourism has enabled the establishment of various types of hotels, whose function goes beyond the basic hotel services of accommodation and food (Lebe, 2013). Depending on the type of facility, hotels today offer different types of rooms, appropriately designed dedicated spaces, adapted to a range of various non-hospitality services, and equipment appropriate to the category of the hotel itself.

Unlike a classic hotel, a dispersed hotel is not a hotel at all, but a new model of tourism development. The condition for the emergence of a dispersed hotel is the connection and cooperation of the population of a certain place (potential tourist destination), which uses all existing resources and connects all existing activities there into a comprehensive, unique and attractive tourist offering, aimed at a precisely defined target group of tourists (Črnigoj Marc et al., 2016).

In addition, the dispersed hotel offers a method of resistance against urbanization, as it involves the development of tourism in rural and remote areas, abandoned to demographic and economic decline. In this way, the development of the dispersed hotel concept promotes the revitalization of the countryside and ensures the preservation of the architectural characteristics of a particular location.

For the successful operation of a dispersed hotel concept at a specific destination that follows sustainable development guidelines, it is essential to adhere to the following guidelines (Šifković Vrbica, 2017):

- The owner of the hotel is a cooperative as a legal and organizational form established by local residents. It is also possible that one investor owns the entire hotel, but such a dispersed hotel is not a representative example of a sustainable method of operating in the local community.

- All members of the cooperative that form a dispersed hotel must have equal rights in decision-making.
- The purpose of establishing a dispersed hotel is to demonstrate and facilitate the implementation of projects local circular economy and sustainable self-sufficiency in a practical way and thus to encourage thinking about sustainable consumption patterns.
- The end result of establishing a dispersed hotel concept should be simultaneous benefit for all involved, specifically the local population, tourists and the environment.

The concept of a dispersed hotel at the operational level encompasses the following tangible elements (Šifković Vrbica, 2017):

- the combined parts of a dispersed hotel are: reservations, promotion, check-in, reception, which, like in a hotel, is the point of contact for all events and business processes, and other hotel offerings, depending on the concept of the specific hotel (for example, a common dining room in which food is offered to guests);
- dispersed parts, which are mainly reflected in accommodation in smaller houses (rooms) in a smaller town.

2.2 Why dispersion?

The concept of a dispersed hotel has some key advantages, which we present below. It is primarily about solving problems faced by the residents of rural and remote areas, such as: emigration, population aging, the decline of remote rural villages and, last but not least, environmental sustainability. At the same time, by solving perceived problems in rural areas, the tourist offering of the place or destination in which the dispersed hotel will be established is also expanded (De Montis et al., 2015).

By combining all material and immaterial resources, the location of the dispersed hotel comes back to life and the countryside is gradually revitalized. In this way, the funds obtained from the developed tourist activity remain within the local population, who are united around a common project, creating a sense of belonging,

which is one of the basic prerequisites for creating hospitable behavior of locals towards tourists. This ultimately proves to be an important contribution to the well-being of the local community, which is manifested as a connected and clearly defined tourist offer of the entire place, formed by coordinated local providers of the place (destination) in which the dispersed hotel operates (Confalonieri, 2011).

The indirect effects of establishing a dispersed hotel are mainly seen outside of tourism activities: the opportunity to market agricultural products, create local jobs, and the absence of large investors, which means that almost all profits remain in the local environment. The overarching advantage of implementing the dispersed hotel concept is that sustainable development thus becomes one of the important quality standards of tourism services, the consumers of which are loyal, educated tourists who respect local tradition and the environmental sustainability of the place (destination) to which they return (Dragicevic & Letunic, 2015). The key advantages of establishing the dispersed hotel concept are presented in Figure 1.

WHY DISPERSION	
Solves the problems of rural areas	Enriches tourist offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outmigration • Population aging • Decline of remote rural villages • Environmental sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combining all local resources (empty spaces of large or small houses, crops, work, knowledge and tradition) • The place comes to life, the countryside is revitalized • The funds from tourism activities remain with the local population, who come together around a common project • Local hospitality, which brings the rural landscape closer to tourists

Figure 1: Advantages of establishing a distributed hotel concept

Source: own.

3 How to achieve a dispersed hotel? From initiative to evaluation

The establishment of a dispersed hotel concept generally takes place in five distinct phases. The duration of each phase and the order in which they are carried out depend on the specifics of the individual place (destination) in which they occur, and above all on the maturity of the local community and how aware they are of the benefits that a dispersed hotel brings. In practice, it very often happens that

individual phases need to be repeated. Roughly speaking, the five main phases of establishing a dispersed hotel concept are (Šifkovič Vrbica, 2017):

- initiative;
- identifying key stakeholders of a distributed hotel;
- steps to establish a distributed hotel;
- communication;
- evaluation.

3.1 Initiative

The initiative is the first and most essential phase of establishing a dispersed hotel. In this phase, the potential initiator critically assesses whether the place (destination) has the resources that are of key importance for the existence of a dispersed hotel. These include, in particular: spatial resources and real estate, knowledge of the local population and the ability to engage in tourism, and lastly, the willingness of the inhabitants to devote themselves to tourism activities. If it turns out that there are enough resources, the next phase involves the creation of an initiative. The initiator of a dispersed hotel can be any economic entity or individual from the intended location of the establishment of the dispersed hotel. The initiative preparation phase includes several activities, among which it is necessary to highlight targeted and continuous contact with stakeholders (providers) of tourism services at the destination and the possibility of operating in a connected and organized manner, which is a necessary prerequisite for establishing a dispersed hotel. Based on the situation on the ground, the initiator prepares an assessment of the capacity of the local community and an assessment of the ability to self-organize. They conduct a conversation with the municipality, whose support is necessary for the implementation of such a project. It is highly desirable to organize a visit to a dispersed hotel as an example of good practice, whereby providers on the ground would learn first-hand about the key advantages of such a concept and how it works. It is crucial that the initiative presented is based on the real needs of the local environment and solves at least one of the problems of the local community.

3.2 Identifying key stakeholders of a distributed hotel

In the second phase, it is necessary to identify key stakeholders and their role in establishing the concept of a dispersed hotel. There are several groups of stakeholders who differ in purpose and task in establishing the a dispersed hotel. It is important to emphasize that the successful establishment of the aforementioned concept requires coordinated action by all participants, which can only be achieved if the tasks of each stakeholder group are clearly defined. The following groups of stakeholders participate in establishing the a dispersed hotel (Šifkovič Vrbica, 2017):

- cooperative;
- municipality;
- other organizations and companies;
- local population;
- supporting actors and
- tourists.

A cooperative is the most suitable legal organizational form for local community projects, as it is based on two basic starting points of participatory action; co-management and co-ownership. In the first phase, the members of the cooperative or its founders are precisely those providers of tourist services in the local place (destination) who will offer various services within the framework of the dispersed hotel at the beginning of its operation: accommodation providers, catering service providers, tourist farms, sports activity organizers, local organizations operating in the field of culture, etc. In the next phase, it is possible to connect other providers and garner their views (Dragicevic et al., 2016). The main purpose of the cooperative is to ensure that the dispersed hotel, based on the authenticity of the local environment, is offering a comprehensive range of high-quality services and activities.

The role of the municipality in establishing a dispersed hotel is important and is reflected primarily in support services. The municipality is not part of the cooperative, but it can be an initiator and active supporter in establishing a dispersed hotel in the local environment, as it is well aware of the specific problems on the ground that the local community faces. The municipality's support is reflected

primarily in providing administrative support for various formal procedures, providing subsidies for the arrangement and rental of certain premises (this mainly concerns the common spaces offered by the dispersed hotel) and promoting the concept of a dispersed hotel at home and abroad.

Other organizations and companies that offer non-tourism services in the local area (destination) are of key importance, as they are services that tourists absolutely need during their stay at the destination. These include services such as: pharmacies, post offices, banks, health services, laundries, garden centers, crafts, etc. Although such organizations are not members of the cooperative, they are aware of the clear benefits that they can gain by cooperating with a dispersed hotel.

The role of the local population, who are not part of the cooperative, is primarily manifested in ensuring broader support from the local community. In order to achieve such support, it is crucial to clearly and transparently communicate from the very beginning the key benefits that the entire place (destination) would have from the establishment of a dispersed hotel and to realize such benefits later. In this way, the idea of establishing a dispersed hotel will be recognized as an idea that everyone would profit from, even those who are not involved in tourism and do not participate in the cooperative.

Supporting actors in the establishment of a dispersed hotel are mainly organizations located outside the local community, at the regional or national level. These are mainly regional development agencies, local, regional and national tourism organizations, various action groups operating at the local community level, various non-governmental organizations, etc. In addition to administrative assistance, and the knowledge and financial mechanisms that they can offer to support the project of the dispersed hotel, some established organizations can be included in the range of hotel services, offering activities and services relating to recreation, culture, sports, education, event organization, etc. (Dragicevic et al., 2016).

Tourists are an indispensable part of a dispersed hotel, so when planning the establishment of this concept in a particular location, it is essential to take into account any previous experience with tourism at this destination. If there have been no organized tourist activities in the location so far, the cooperatives must, together with the local community, define what kind of tourists they want there or define one

or more target groups that the dispersed hotel wishes to attract. If tourism is already established at the destination, it is necessary to analyze existing data and consider whether the dispersed hotel is to be aimed at existing tourist target groups or a completely new target group (Monge et al., 2015). The segmentation of tourist target groups can be carried out on the basis of several criteria (location, gender, age, level of education, motive for visit, income, etc.).

3.3 Steps to setting up a distributed hotel

Establishing a distributed hotel is a complex project that involves several different phases and is an enormous logistical challenge from idea to realization (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Steps to establishing a distributed hotel concept

Source: own.

It is possible to roughly define a few basic steps, but their duration, time sequence and, above all, the operational implementation of individual activities must be specifically adapted to the specifics of the individual case or local community in which the dispersed hotel will be created. The steps for establishing a dispersed hotel are as follows (Šifković Vrbica, 2017):

- preparing a presentation idea and gaining support from the local community;
- drawing up a plan for establishing a dispersed hotel;
- defining hotel services;
- obtaining permits and complying with standards;
- establishing a cooperative; and
- obtaining financial resources.

In the first step, which involves preparing a presentation idea, it is essential to secure the support of the municipality and the wider community and to prepare a list of the first potential providers of tourist services in the local area who would like to become part of the cooperative. The mandatory principles in preparing a successful presentation idea that will gain the support of the wider local community are participation and open communication. From a content perspective, the presentation of the business idea must include: an assessment of the needs of the local community from which the business idea originates, an assessment of the potential that the local community has for implementing such a business idea in the local environment, a presentation of examples of domestic and foreign good practices, and the preparation of a draft concept for a dispersed hotel.

The idea needs to be presented to the wider local community by organizing an event, which may include a viewing of a case study of a dispersed hotel or a presentation by one of the representatives of an existing dispersed hotel. In the event of positive responses from the wider local community, a cooperative is formed at this stage, whose task is to prepare a framework for the concept of the operation of the dispersed hotel, based on the draft concept and any suggestions made by the wider local community (participating in the discussion). At this stage, continuous and open communication with the local community is again very important, especially in terms of clearly highlighting the concrete benefits that the wider local community will gain in relation to the perceived problems it faces, the resources available, the investments and any obstacles that have already been identified. The main goal of this step is to obtain the principled support of the local community, which is understood as a green light for further work.

Drawing up a plan for establishing a dispersed hotel is a step that includes a situation analysis, a precise definition of the desired type of dispersed hotel and the definition of the hotel infrastructure. When analyzing the situation, it is necessary to precisely define the foundations on which the dispersed hotel concept will be developed. As previously highlighted, in the first phase, these are the needs that exist in the local community and the problems and obstacles that the local population perceives. The concept of a dispersed hotel that is based on the needs of the local population and at the same time solves the problems of the local community has a greater potential for success in the local environment. In addition, the concept of a dispersed hotel necessarily includes the following elements of the destination: natural resources ,

cultural attractions and specialties, local produce, cuisine and drinks, cultural specialties and traditions, infrastructure, buildings and supply of basic goods, knowledge present in the local community, existing tourism in the local community, compliance with any development plans and strategic documents of the local community and, last but not least, an analysis of stakeholders who are willing to support the idea of establishing a dispersed hotel (Presenza et al., 2019). All of the above elements must be analyzed and assessed from the perspective of a potential starting point on which the dispersed hotel will be designed.

Next, it is necessary to define the desired type of dispersed hotel. The definition of the type of dispersed hotel is connected primarily to the conducted situation analysis. In this step, it is necessary to define: the desired type of tourists (target group, one or more), the type of dispersed hotel offering (year-round or seasonal operation), the specificity and uniqueness of what the dispersed hotel offers and details relating to the appearance of the offering itself (location of the reception, location of the hotel accommodation units, organization of catering services, methods of supplying tourists with local produce during their stay, organization of other non-catering offers of the dispersed hotel, organization of promotion, etc.). In this step, it is necessary to simultaneously define the coordination of the implementation of catering services in a way that will enable an increase in the well-being of the local community, considering all environmental and social standards for the implementation of activities. Finally, all decisions related to the choice of the desired type of dispersed hotel directly depend on the sum of the planned investments for the selected type of dispersed hotel (Monge et al., 2015).

Special attention should be paid to the organization of the hotel infrastructure in this step. Depending on the specific case, it is necessary to consider whether it is better to connect existing accommodation and catering providers (if the latter already exists and operates) or to build everything from scratch. An important part of the hotel infrastructure is also the infrastructure relating to common areas, such as: reception, dining room, common areas for carrying out individual recreational activities, etc. It is necessary to be particularly careful when taking over and reusing abandoned areas and examining any formal obstacles. Last but not least, in this step it is also necessary to prepare an assessment of the financial aspect of the idea itself.

When defining the hotel services that will be part of a dispersed hotel's offering, careful consideration must be given to the definition and standardization of two groups of services:

- the offer of basic hotel services, which includes accommodation, meals, cleaning and maintenance;
- the offer of other services of a more tourist nature, which includes various experiences, guided tours, local traffic management and micromobility in the place/destination, events at the destination, various cultural, educational and entertainment programs, and more.

It is worth noting that when implementing all the services of a dispersed hotel, it is necessary to establish internal business standards that relate to meeting the needs of tourists. Some of these are: environmental and nature conservation standards, protection of cultural heritage, sustainable mobility, sustainable supply of locally produced organic food, sustainable energy supply, water and waste management, accessibility of infrastructure for people with limited mobility, cooperative management, fairness of payments and pricing policy, and others (Romolini et al., 2017).

In addition to clearly defined internal business standards, it is essential to take into account all legislation and prescribed external standards for the implementation of catering and tourism activities, such as: prescribed standards for the implementation of catering services, food safety standards, registration of activities, tourist tax, etc. In the case of any construction work, it is essential to take into account legislation relating to permits in the field of interference with nature and any building permits relating to the field of building permits for accommodation facilities and any interference with nature.

The next step is to legally and formally establish a cooperative. The purpose of a cooperative, which is established by at least three natural or legal persons, is to ensure the economic benefit and development of the economic or social activities of its members. The cooperative is based on equality in cooperation and management. Regardless of the amount of capital investment, the rule »one member, one vote« applies. More information about establishing a cooperative is available on the

website of the Cooperative Association of Slovenia (www.zzs.si) and the Slovenian Business Point SPOT (www.spot.gov.si).

The last step in the process of establishing a dispersed hotel is obtaining financial resources. Smaller investments can be made by the owners of the premises, but larger investments, especially those related to common areas and the start of operation of the hotel itself, require obtaining funds from other sources (municipality, public tenders from domestic ministries and funds, and funds available from European sources).

3.4 Communication

Good communication or good information flow is an excellent way to successfully realize the idea of establishing a dispersed hotel. In order to ensure transparency in communication, it is recommended that the project idea is publicly published online and that the public is kept informed about the progress of the project. Successful communication is ensured if the successful transfer of information takes place in several directions at the same time. First and foremost, it is important that communication between cooperative members runs smoothly. It is also mandatory that the cooperative communicates adequately with the municipality, key stakeholders and employees, and all others who are not part of the cooperative but are included in the dispersed hotel offering. Last but not least, appropriate communication and sharing of necessary information with tourists and the general public significantly contributes to the success of the entire dispersed hotel concept.

In order for communication to be successful, it is essential to prepare an appropriate communication plan, the emphasis of which must be on ensuring sustainability and communicating the elements of a cooperative dispersed hotel with the aim of encouraging changes in ways of thinking and motivation towards more sustainable behavior. It is imperative to adapt communication channels to this so that the messages sent can achieve their purpose. An important part of communication with tourists is promotion, which, in cooperation with the tourist organization and other stakeholders responsible for promoting tourism at the destination, will influence tourists' decisions regarding the choice of a dispersed hotel for their vacation.

3.5 Evaluation

The last phase of establishing a dispersed hotel is the evaluation phase. The purpose of this phase is to monitor progress in the realization of the set idea of establishing a cooperative dispersed hotel, identify possible deviations from what is planned and improve the later steps in the realization of the project. Given that this is a joint local community project, which in a broader context solves the perceived problems of the local community from which it originates, it is essential to ensure continuous support for the realization of the project from the wider local environment.

The evaluation phases also take place during the implementation of the project, so it is essential to provide appropriate means to measure the satisfaction of both groups directly involved in the operation of the dispersed hotel: hotel guests and providers who are involved in the operation of the cooperative that manages the dispersed hotel. This evaluates the realization of the idea from both perspectives for a broader picture of the evaluation in the local community, just as in the project establishment phase. It is necessary to evaluate the opinion of other residents of the area, who provide the final piece of the jigsaw of the coordination of the hotel's operation with the local community.

4 Conclusion

The dispersed hotel is an innovative form of tourist experience. Despite the fact that the word "hotel" in its name is somewhat confusing, it is a new tourism development concept, based on the principles of sustainability and the circular economy. The emphasis of the concept is on maintaining the authenticity of the tourist experience and solving the specific problems within a particular local community. In this way, the solidarity component of tourism, based on maintaining concern for the well-being of the local population and the entire environment, is brought to the forefront.

It is necessary to highlight the positive features and benefits that the concept of a dispersed hotel can bring to the local community. These are reflected in the local environment in which the dispersed hotel operates. They are mainly manifested in the reuse of existing resources and their combination into a new concept that breathes new life into the place the hotel is established. An important factor is also that the dispersed hotel creates new jobs for the local population, which means that

potentially remote locations and rural areas are revitalized. In a broader sense, the concept of a dispersed hotel enables environmental sustainability, since as the concept is not based on large investments and the mass nature of the tourist experience, it consequently impacts significantly less on the environment.

The presented phases of establishing a dispersed hotel concept constitute only a basic starting point in theory. The implementation of the individual phases in practice depends on the specificities of the local community in which the dispersed hotel concept is to be established. Practice shows that one of the biggest obstacles is the effort to gain broader support in the local community, which often leads to a standstill in the individual phases of the idea's realization. There is also often a lack of knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary for the development of an individual tourism idea, as remote and rural areas often face the problem of emigration of the younger population and, consequently, an aging population. There is no exact recipe for establishing a dispersed hotel, but in this process, it is crucial to connect the concept with a specific problem that the local community as a whole is facing.

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