

The Role of Retail in the Old City Centre Revitalization: Case Study

Armand Faganel

University of Primorska, Faculty of Management, Slovenia
armand.faganel@gmail.com

Beti Reisman

Mestna občina Koper, Slovenia
reisman.b@gmail.com

Danijel Bratina

University of Primorska, Faculty of Management, Slovenia
danijel.bratina@fm-kp.si

Different retail types have been developed in the last decades, mostly outside of city centres throughout Europe. Consumers' behaviour consequently changed and had negative effects on development and decline of traditional city centres. City centre retail provided not only economic but also social benefits to the community (Thomas and Bromley 2003). Balsas (2007) highlighted that revitalization of the affected city centres includes also "housing improvements, retail modernizations, infill and brownfield redevelopment, public space improvements, streetscaping and pedestrianization schemes". Ribeiro (2010) emphasises that historical buildings represent an important asset in older towns' centres and that the cautious optimization and use of these assets are a challenge for owners and for the entire community. Van den Berg and Braun (1999) identified four important groups of stakeholders in the planning and management processes of city centres revitalization: companies and retail, potential and existing inhabitants, city visitors and investors. While Neto, Pinto and Burns (2014) in their study evaluate the impacts of urban regeneration and stress the importance of a planned strategic approach.

This paper deals with the revival of old city centres and the role of retail trade. The theoretical part includes basic concepts as well as the reasons that led to dying out of old city centres. The paper is a case study based on the presentation of the chosen municipality, as well as on the analysis of its activities for the revival of the old city centre and a qualitative study, in which we investigated the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders regarding the situation and the activities undertaken by the municipality for the preservation of trade in the city centre. It was determined that the selected municipality is moderately successful in revitalizing the city centre, while at the same time we were using the perceptions of stakeholders in order to identify possible disadvantages and possibilities for reducing them. Research has been done among entrepreneurs inside the city centre to find out whether they are ready to cooperate with other stakeholders in the development of the process of establishing city centre marketing. To reach the research goals different methods have been employed: content analysis of secondary sources as municipality policy documents, half structured interview with main stakeholders and an exploratory case study method. Finally we provided theoretical and methodological contribution in the field of revitalization of the old city centre in the selected municipality and beyond, so we were able to present a viable marketing strategy for the revitalization of city centres. The additional goal of this paper is to propose an integrated view for the discussions on the revitalization of private and public spaces, city marketing and on the municipality roles and interventions.

Keywords: city revitalization, historic centre, inhabitants, retail regeneration, city marketing

References

- Balsas, C.J.L. 2007. City Centre Revitalization in Portugal: A Study of Lisbon and Porto. *Journal of Urban Design* 12 (2): 231-259.
- Neto, L., P. Pinto and M. Burns. 2014. Evaluating the Impacts of Urban Regeneration Companies in Portugal: The Case of Porto. *Planning Practice & Research* 29 (5): 525-542.
- Ribeiro, F.L. 2010. Urban regeneration economics: The case of Lisbon's old downtown. *International Journal of Strategic Property Management* 12 (3) 203-213.
- Thomas, C.J. and R.D.F. Bromley. 2003. Retail revitalization and small town centres: the contribution of shopping linkages. *Applied Geography* 23 (1): 47–71.
- Van den Berg, L. and E. Braun 1999. Urban Competitiveness, Marketing and the Need for Organising Capacity. *Urban Studies* 36 (5): 987-999.