

Medieval Festival Dubrovnik

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Medieval Festival Dubrovnik

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Abstract

Heritage tourism is becoming more and more in demand for the tourists who are expecting a more authentic experience in their destination. Dubrovnik's rich cultural and historical heritage makes it a viable location for the implementation of a medieval festival. A medieval festival in Dubrovnik would thus provide benefits to both tourists and hosts. The issues with organizing any kind of a manifestation are related to audience engagement and stakeholders' cost/benefits. A viability research has been undertaken in order to determine which format and content would be the most well received. This research includes the comparative analysis of existing medieval festivals, an interview with a travel expert, and a survey taken on 195 participants. The research shows that the participants prefer arts and crafts among the options presented in addition to participating in a medieval feast, which has confirmed the initial suppositions. These initial suppositions were based on the historical aspect of Dubrovnik, the impact of the filming of Game of Thrones on the city of Dubrovnik, and analysis of how the implementation of creative tourism in a context of a medieval festival while enhancing the importance of heritage tourism. Based on this information, further analysis has shown that there is room for this festival. The implementation of this festival would extend the tourist season in Dubrovnik area while providing a fun and educational experience to the visitors with large financial benefits to the stakeholders.

Keywords: Heritage and Creative Tourism, Culture and History of Dubrovnik, Croatia, Medieval and Renaissance Festival, Reenactment Event, Cosplay

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to organize a medieval festival in Dubrovnik which is not completely authentic, but rather an imaginative world based on the Middle Ages. The goal is to create a lively fantasy world in which the visitors make up the whole festival by already coming dressed up in costumes which are based on medieval clothes or similar. This is why the festival is not open to visitors in ordinary civilian clothes, since they will disturb the picture of a lively fantasy world. Thus, the reason for this restriction is to achieve the desired effect of bringing the medieval feeling to life and give the visitors the chance of escaping from ordinary life surroundings. Dubrovnik has a very rich history and architecture from the medieval times and an almost unlimited potential for the organization of a medieval festival.

The high city walls facing the Adriatic Sea made Dubrovnik famous. The city in southern Croatia is a perfect location for a medieval festival with its medieval architecture. I want to show how special Dubrovnik is and that a part of the history can come to life again.

Services can be improved such as the Game of Thrones tours, for example. If the tour guides dress up to fit the theme of the walking tour and even the guided people participate as well, the agency organizing the tours is going to sell a more intense experience. I am going to compare other festivals, especially medieval festivals here in Croatia and see what they offer. A new trend coming up is creative tourism and I want to do further research on this topic. To find out the interests in Medieval Festival taking place in Dubrovnik, I conduct an interview and a survey to see what people would want to experience and what their expectations are.

History of Dubrovnik

Nodari (2017) noted that the history of Dubrovnik goes back to the 3rd century BC. In the Middle Ages, Dubrovnik (then the Republic of Ragusa) developed into a flourishing city-state.

In the first place the city wall should be mentioned. With a length of 1940 meters and a width of up to 6 meters, the wall includes all buildings from all historical periods of the city. These include the main promenade (Stradun), three monasteries, the Prince's Palace, the Church of St. Blasius, etc. But not only the wall makes Dubrovnik a unique sight, many other first-class preserved buildings and historical uniqueness can be found in Dubrovnik. On the offshore island of Lopud and in the city of Ploče, for example, there are military hospitals, in which arriving travelers were put into a 40-day plague quarantine as early as 1377. Nowadays Dubrovnik is a stronghold of Adriatic tourism and a jet set metropolis for high society. It is also important to mention that the UNESCO added the old town of Dubrovnik to the list of world cultural heritage in 1979.

Dubrovnik became famous as a location for the popular television series "Game of Thrones." The Lovrijenac Fortress, the Pile Gate and parts of the city fortifications were used as sets in the series. The well-preserved old town which is historically rich counts to the Dubrovnik's most popular tourist assets and is especially being highlighted by the series having medieval-like context (Tkalec, Zilic and Recher, 2017).

Game of Thrones—King's Landing

Šegota (n.d.) stated that the city on the Adriatic serves as a filming location for the TV series "Game of Thrones." Hardly any other city in Europe has experienced so much hype in recent years as Dubrovnik. Part of the responsibility for this is the film team from the US television network HBO, which shot numerous scenes from "Game of Thrones" here, more

particularly in the fifth season. Tourists now flock to wherever the series has been filmed. There are now guided tours to the locations too, but tourists can also discover the locations on their own. Readers are informed about the various locations in the series with numerous online articles and a lot of tours are offered to the tourists who are on site at the corresponding film locations (Bowyer, 2017).

Special Events and City Tourism

With the upgrading of the already built cultural heritage, some regions and certain cities tried to develop anew what is also called ‘heritage mining’ (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Getz (2008) recognized, for some years now, under the aspect of reinforced competition between cities, that special events (even those that have a long tradition) are increasingly used for city tourism and marketed under the term event. A separate term has emerged for the staging of special events in tourism; one speaks here of event tourism, which, according to Getz, means the following: “The systematic planning, development and marketing of festivals and special events as tourist attractions, development catalysts, and image builders for attractions and destination areas” (Getz, 1991, p. 12). The literature provides me with tips on how to organize a successful festival, studies on the economic, social, and cultural benefits.

An event trip to an important, non-everyday event such as a medieval festival gives travelers and spectators a feeling of being a participant; the viewer becomes part of the successful event. Cultural trips are always adventure trips.

Today it is the mass events and top events in the sports, cultural and entertainment sectors which are considered meeting places for people. Sports, culture, and city trips thus become the new mass movement of the 21st century. Recreation is increasingly equated with active experiences such as shopping or artificial amusement and theme parks/events.

Events can be created both naturally and artificially. Natural events are regularly recurring events (e.g., seasonal) or very unique natural spectacles. The natural events are based on the original tourist offer of a region. This includes natural factors such as climate, geographical location, vegetation, flora, and fauna as well as socio-cultural factors such as culture, tradition, language, mentality, and customs. All other events, whether in the sports or cultural sector are artificially generated and are often lavishly staged. They are elaborated and organized for a certain target group and usually follow a special goal. For example, cultural events such as medieval festivals are specially planned and marketed so that the general public can find out about it and, in the best case, decide to visit such events.

The main target groups here for the medieval festival in Dubrovnik are tourists, but the local population is also invited to participate. In particular, the event is attended by tourists who have come specifically for the event and are not already in the region.

Many traditions and customs are to be maintained at this event. The medieval market enables the presentation and sale of crafted jewelry from the medieval times of Dubrovnik. Experiences are sold everywhere. If it is while shopping, on a vacation, during a trip, in a restaurant or gastronomy, it is the experience which counts.

For tourism, the trend towards events means an increasing number of visitors and guests, a higher utilization of tourism businesses and leisure facilities and thus growing retail sales. Event tourism is even often decoupled from holiday tourism and offers a chance of survival for the transport, gastronomy, and accommodation industries in the off-season and even in bad weather. Are attractive events held in an otherwise little-known city or region, there is a chance for this region for repositioning.

In principle, tourism destinations are in international competition with their range of products and services. As a result of globalization, there is an alignment of structures and forms of offer. It becomes more difficult to highlight a profile and a special feature for the

respective target area. Events can help to stand out from the crowd. There is a risk that the event idea will be picked up in the large number of similar events for example the many authentic medieval markets, how a city can still score points and offer something special. Here the individual event loses its appeal and uniqueness. The relationship between uniqueness and everydayness of an event shows the limits for a lasting binding effect on visitors.

Creative Tourism and Culture

Creative tourism, that is, the involvement of locals and tourists in the creation of tourist products called 'co-creation' (Binkhorst and den Dekker, 2009), is considered a new generation of tourism. Creative tourism offers experiences which are authentic and rather flexible, let co-creation among tourists as well as hosts happen and enable a variation to mass cultural tourism being serially reproduced (Richards, 2011). The tourism of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) develops sustainably through the contribution of the value co-creation behavior of the residents (Lan, Zheng, Tian, Zhang, Law and Zhang, 2021). Both tangible and intangible heritage can be preserved and promoted through tourism, through which crafts, art as well as other creative activities are promoted (UNWTO, 2018). Generating more engaging experiences is necessary for leisure and tourism producers which is the epitome of 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The ambition and willingness of tourists to learn not only to consume, but also to create something increases their cultural capital (Hjalager and Richards, 2002). Creative tourism lays a foundation for hosts and guests to learn together while experiencing something together, thus creating a clearer understanding of local culture. Creative tourism can be measured as the willingness of tourism to visit places recommended by local people and to live like locals. Cultural tourism in cities means that people intend to gain experience and new information by moving to other cities in other

countries for cultural attractions in order to meet their cultural needs (ETC, 2005).

Unfortunately, less attention is paid to social sustainability, while the focus is on economic benefits, but tourism is about meeting other people, other cultures, and a different environment. When only focusing on competitiveness, we tend to disregard sustainability and that results in bad and no lasting outcome (Adamo, Ferrari and Gilli, 2019). For ensuring the social sustainability of a destination, the needs of the locals should be considered very important.

Methods

Exploration of available Medieval Festivals and Research on my ideas

To know what activities to include for the medieval festival in Dubrovnik, I compared three different festivals which are all based on the medieval times in order to gain some insight in what makes them so popular to the attendees. I also interviewed Ashley Colburn, a TV producer from California and conducted a survey to find out the interests in Medieval Festival Dubrovnik, Croatia. I interviewed her to get the opinion of a travel expert who is doing travel documentaries and therefore I expected to get professional tips on how to arouse great interest among the visitors. The comparison serves to get to know what is already out there and with the survey I want to know the interest of other people, mainly students.

Results

Existing Medieval Festivals

All three festivals include the following activities: reenactment battles, music, story tellers, fire dancers, games, talks, demonstrations, animal displays, archery, workshops, and craft sessions. The comparison shows what each festival offers additionally and from what century it is inspired.

Renesansni Festival Koprivnica – a four-day renaissance festival in Croatia– is based on history from the 16th and 17th centuries. The festival builds on the originality of Koprivnica and its historical facts, and fortress walls as well as a fortress from the Renaissance can be seen. In addition to the already mentioned activities, the renaissance festival offers traditional medieval dishes which are prepared according to original medieval recipes and this festival seems to be family-friendly by having a labyrinth for kids.

Valhalla Viking Festival – a three-day Viking festival in the United Kingdom– is oriented on the Scandinavian time 739-1066 AD. It is not about the location, but rather about the content of the festival which is living the Viking culture. Throughout the day, visitors can enjoy plenty of activities and in the evenings gigantic feasts are the absolute highlight of the festival. In addition to the already mentioned activities, visitors can enjoy axe throwing, taking photographs with the animals, and have a feast where people are lining the long tables.

Mittelalterlich Phantasie Spectaculum (MPS) – a two-day medieval festival in Germany – which is a large traveling medieval culture festival, this means that the festival appears annually at a number of locations in Germany. The festival attaches great importance to creating an imaginative, lively world based on the Middle Ages. The motto of the event is *not authentic, but fantastic* and is in the form of a medieval market. It is inspired from the Early Middle Ages (End of 5th-10th century) also called the Dark Ages, High Middle Ages (11th-13th century) and Late Middle Ages (14th-15th centuries). In addition to the already mentioned activities, the festival does costume competition and offers the possibility for converting real money into a *gold coin* currency. Based on my experience and the website, this type of festival is encouraging visitors to already come dressed up in costumes, so people feel like living it and dive into the medieval world whereas they can be part of it. This specialty turns out to be very popular among visitors and almost no people in civil clothes can be seen on the festival area.

Interview with Ashley Colburn

Ashley Colburn is a specialist in hosting as well as producing travel documentaries and won two times an Emmy award. She gave a guest lecture at RIT Croatia and is a very valuable source because she is traveling the world, has the opportunity to get to know different cultures and got in touch with various traditions. Based on her travel experiences she exactly knows how tourists can learn best about a destination's culture and festivals are a great way to dive into history. She is of the opinion that a festival can change the impression one gets from a destination. Whenever people go to a destination where a festival is happening, they discover more of the culture and relive the history, because usually a festival has some kind of reenactment of a significant event that perhaps happened there. It is like going back into time and especially in Europe, when a tourist goes somewhere, he or she knows that this happened a long time ago compared to the US which is such a young country. It is almost as stepping back into a movie scene when people are visiting such a destination. So, it is a great opportunity for people to experience the history of a destination. Not just read about it or walk through a museum. It is almost like a museum comes alive when there is a festival. Often there is music, traditional food and a festival that is based on something in particular that has made that city or destination what it is today.

What she would expect from a medieval festival in Dubrovnik is definitely that it would take place in the old city. She thinks that this is a must. Dubrovnik has been the set of many movie scenes or TV shows, and it has been exactly that medieval feeling like in the Game of Thrones series. She would definitely expect some form of reenactments and a medieval festival that will show the types of work local people would do then, etc. For example, blacksmiths would show how they do metal objects used in the medieval age like horseshoes, how is their working environment is arranged, etc. Women can show what they used to wash the clothes, how they cooked the food and then also wearing the clothes and

perhaps people could even drink out of whatever they would drink out of. It is about trying to make people feel like they are part of it. Ashley considers this to be very important for tourism too, so that people could understand how a place started. She honestly thinks it would be the highlight of anybody's trip because that is something that (if tourists arranged their trip around a festival) is going to be a moment that stands out the most. Indeed, for every other place, it is just walking through and it is like *oh cool this was a nice city*, but if visitors can actually have that experience of how history was then, this would be the best part of their trip. She would want to be in their shoes, that is, to do the things that they did.

Ms. Colburn also considers that, when sitting down at a restaurant, even if the waiters hear guests speaking English, she would always prefer that the waiter comes to her and asks her in Croatian. First, because the waiters never know if someone does speak Croatian and second, whenever someone is travelling, people do not want to go to a place and feel like they are at home, they want to go to a place to feel different.

She also believes that if a festival has a presentation at some point or a show – maybe this is the reenactment – people would prefer not to have it in English. Instead, it should be done in the local language or what it was then. There needs to be something that excites the curiosity and which makes traveling fun so that tourists feel more. It is like watching a movie that takes place in the middle east and when everyone is speaking English, it does not make the experience authentic. Of course, this is her personal preference, but still, applying the local language could make the festival more interesting because it sounds and appears more authentic. When someone is reenacting an event, tourists will get the point of what is happening, but she added that it would be better to have some kind of show or presentation where it is done in local language too. The greeting and welcome can be in English, but using the local language makes it more unique and tourists do not want to feel as if they are at a tourist trap. Moreover, she thinks a festival can be for local people too. It would be fancy too

if cloaks are available for people to rent costumes. Contests could be conducted to determine who has the best outfits and participants can win cool prizes.

Finally, Ms. Colburn recommends springtime for the medieval festival to take place in Dubrovnik. She also recommends a 3-day festival during the weekend, namely Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from March / April / May, that is, around the time when the cruises are starting to arrive to Dubrovnik and when it is Spring Break. If people do not go during the summer, then going to Europe in late spring is often in people's minds.

Survey

60% of the people who participated in the survey were female and 40% were male (Figure 1). Over 70% of all participants were between 18 – 24 years, live in Croatia, know Dubrovnik and Spring is their preferred season for the event to happen (Figure 2, 3, 4, 5). People want the medieval festival to be authentic with a learning outcome, but they also want to participate as well and have some fun too (Figure 6). Half of the people would dress up, whereas the other half is not interested in wearing a costume (Figure 7). When it comes to demonstrations, only half of the participants would want to see reenactment battles, whereas more people are willing to see artistic shows such as fire dancers and the demonstration of ancient skills, among which blacksmithing is the favorite (Figure 8). Most of the survey participants want to listen to music when they are at the festival and a solid amount wants to hear story tellers, whereas fewer people are interested in talks (Figure 9). The top two activities, the survey participants would be interested in participating, are medieval games and having a feast with traditional medieval meals, followed by craft sessions, archery, and workshops. The activity, participants voted least for is the costume competition which can be explained through the fact that just half of all survey participants would actually want to wear a costume (Figure 10).

Discussion

Suggestion for a Medieval Festival in Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik being a medieval city offers with its existing resources, especially the architecture, the ideal scenery for a medieval festival.

Costume and Decoration

The pearl of the Adriatic is just a perfect location and another reason to attract people from all over is the fact that Game of Thrones was filmed in this area. The old town can be decorated as in the series and people visiting the event can come dressed up too, so everything gets much more dynamic.

Based on what Ashley Colburn was saying as well what half of the survey participants were considering, the fact of wearing a costume can help visitors get into the perspective of how people were living in the medieval period. Based on my own experience, I also consider this point as very crucial. Indeed, having been to the MPS festival a couple of times, an event where all visitors are already coming dressed up in costumes, I could feel that the whole event was alive. When visitors cannot be distinguished from actors, all people feel like they are part of it. This is the point where it gets unique, and people are not only visiting an event where some skills are shown, but also experience this world by themselves for a couple of hours. Imagine a person dresses up as Marin Držić – an important comedy writer from the Dubrovnik Renaissance – who acts as if he is Marin Držić. The visitors of the festival could then talk to him and get a chance to meet the writer, take pictures and remember it as a fun and educational experience.

Having the chance of meeting famous personalities – people, especially hired actors who dressed up and act in a certain way as this particular person – from the medieval times can count to one of the highlights and can provide a deeper dimension to the festival itself.

Another example of this deeper dimension could be the integration of the existing Game of Thrones tours. If the tour guide dresses up, fitting the theme of the walking tour and even the guided people participate as well, the agency organizing the tours is going to sell a whole experience, thereby increasing the immersion, and deepening the medieval dimension of the festival.

Another example of increasing the immersion would be a chance to meet the characters of the Game of Thrones series and replicate some of the scenes which were filmed in King's Landing. The series plays an important role when it comes to tourism in Dubrovnik because it is the first thing people associate with Dubrovnik and know the town as King's Landing. This is why putting the throne to a specific spot is not a bad idea either because visitors would want to take pictures sitting on this famous pompous chair from the Game of Thrones series.

Activities

Components of each medieval based festival are F&B, reenactment battles, music, story tellers, artists, games, talks, demonstrations, various activities such as archery, workshops, and craft sessions. To keep people engaged in the whole event, blacksmithing or wood carving workshops as well as craft sessions on how to make ~~the~~ traditional earrings and other jewelry which was worn in the medieval times in Dubrovnik are offered. To keep up the good mood, which was developed throughout the whole day, concerts can be held by bands who play music with a medieval touch, whereas throughout the day, musicians play traditional medieval music. To top all this, a private dining area can be set up where the feast is going to take place, offering traditional medieval meals. To get a seat at the table, the guests need to be dressed up to feel like being part of a medieval society.

Program

Throughout the whole event, gatekeepers are on Pile as well as on Ploče gate and they also indicate the start of the medieval festival which is officially at 10:30 and ends at 23:30.

Following schedule applies for all three festival days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and serves as an example of how a program for the medieval festival in Dubrovnik could look like.

- Note: All costumed guests get a discount of 50% on the price of entry to the city walls, Lovrijenac Fortress, the Dubrovnik City walking tours and the Game of Thrones tours.

- Special note for the feast in front of the Church of Saint Ignatius: It is recommended to reserve seats as early as possible and wearing costumes are a requirement to participate.

10:00 – 24:00 cloakroom for costumes at Lazareti

12:00 – 14:00 + 19:00 – 21:00 feast in front of the Church of Saint Ignatius

16:00 Costume Competition (Price: free dinner at the feast)

10:30 – 16:30 (every hour) Storyteller about the city of Dubrovnik in the Middle Ages

11:00 / 13:00 / 15:00 / 17:00 Reenactment battles in front of Revelin under the trees

10:30 – 18:00 Archery at Lazareti

10:30 – 18:00 Medieval Games at Lazareti

10:30 – 18:00 Workshops + Craft Sessions at the Medieval Market at Gradac Park

10:30 – 18:30 (every hour) Game of Thrones Tours + extra tour in the evening with torches

10:30 – 19:00 meet characters from the Game of Thrones series e.g. at the Buža filming set

10:30 – 21:30 Medieval Market (traditional jewelry, etc.) at Gradac Park

10:30 – 22:00 meet famous personalities from the Middle Ages such as Marin Držić, Marco Polo, Christophe Columbus, Galileo Galilei, William Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.

21:00 – 23:00 concert besides the Church of Saint Blaise

22:30 – 23:00 fire dancers at Valobran Kaše (watch from Porporela, city walls and the port)

Benefits

Dubrovnik can also save its image and make another impression on visitors by shifting from the (in the meanwhile known) mass tourism destination which sells ordinary souvenirs, to a place where the tourists get a chance to have a unique experience while interacting with its surroundings. Cultural heritage as a general trend is raising interest among people and is about happiness and education. Cultural tourism is the business of education and entertainment.

This festival would add another cultural manifestation to the Dubrovnik tourist offering in addition to the Summer and Winter Festival. Due to the timing of the medieval festival, it would also extend the tourist season in addition to providing quality content to jump start the season.

All attempts must be made to source the actors, the costumes and other festival specific necessities locally, thereby increasing the local spending which will then benefit the locals and make them more supportive shareholders of the festival itself.

Next steps

The next step would be to make a concrete offering of the activities in question and make a financial analysis. This will then form the basis of any further adjustments in regard to the content of the festival. The promotion would be run in cooperation with the Dubrovnik Tourist Board and interest of travel agencies, on the official festival Website, major social media platforms and on the national and foreign televisions.

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Appendix

195 participants

Figure 1

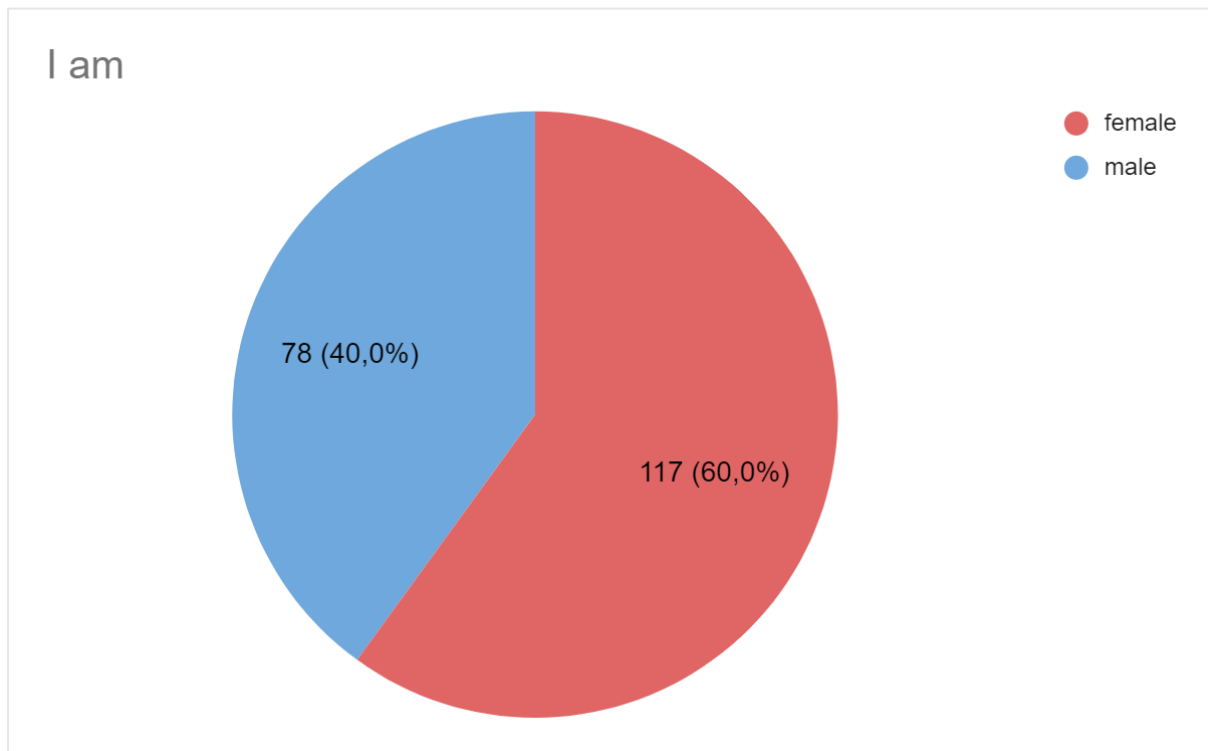


Figure 2

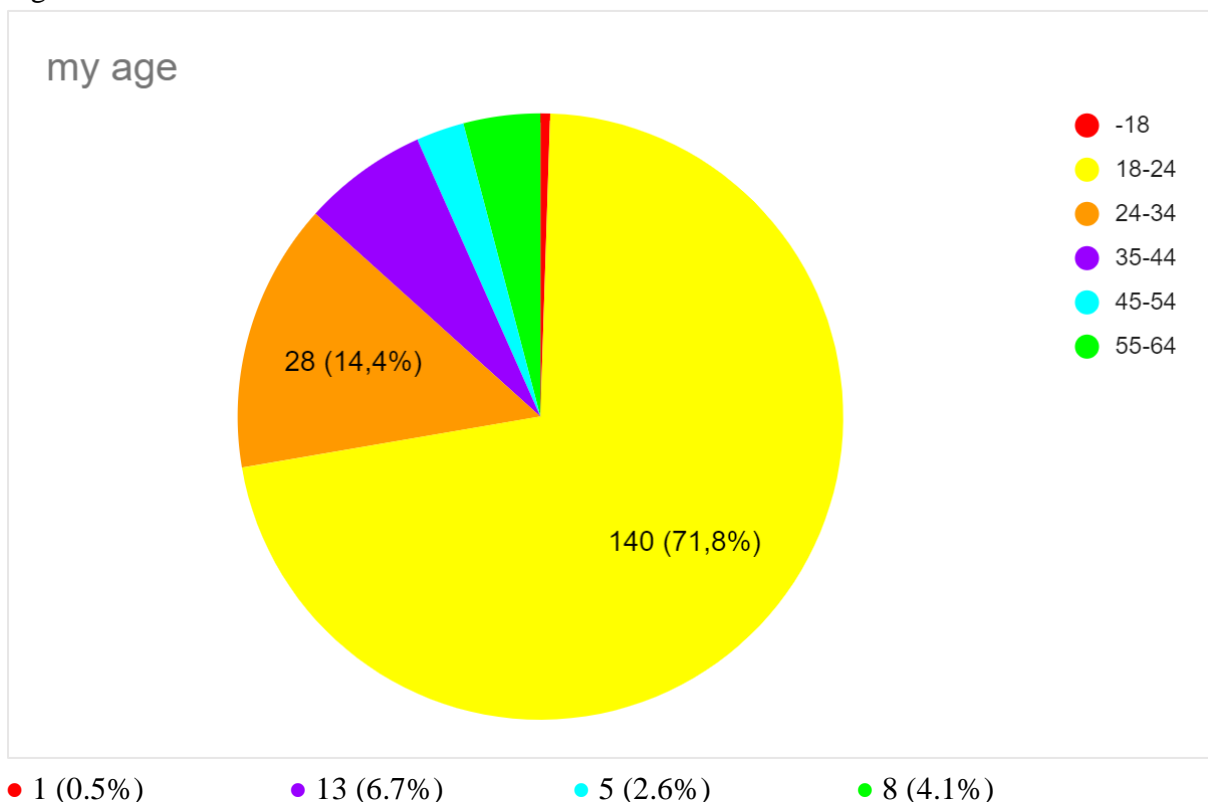


Figure 3

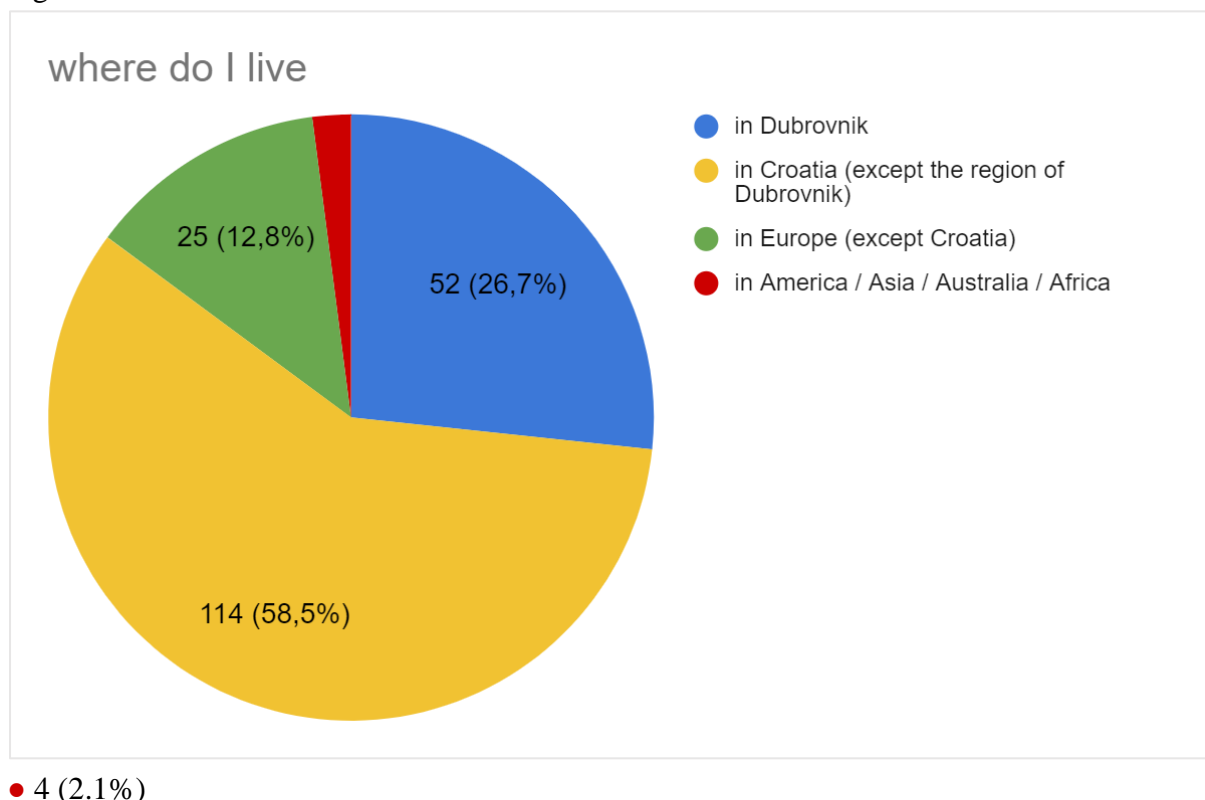


Figure 4

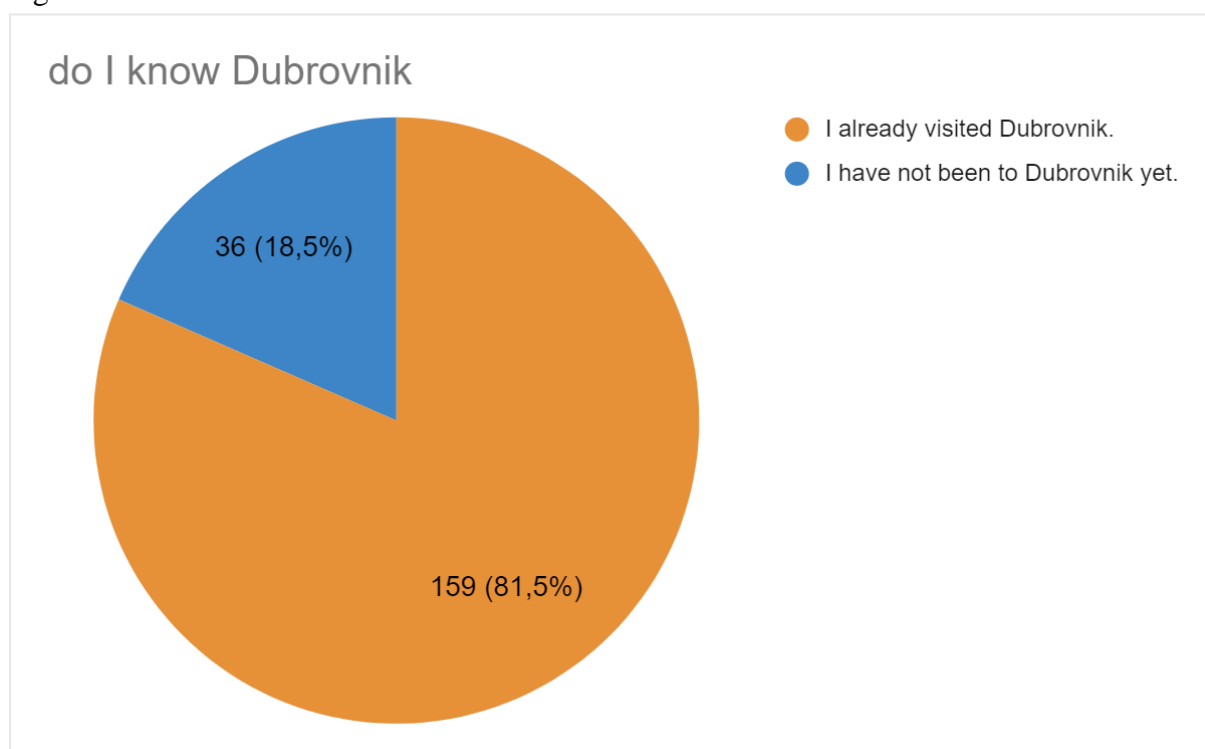


Figure 5

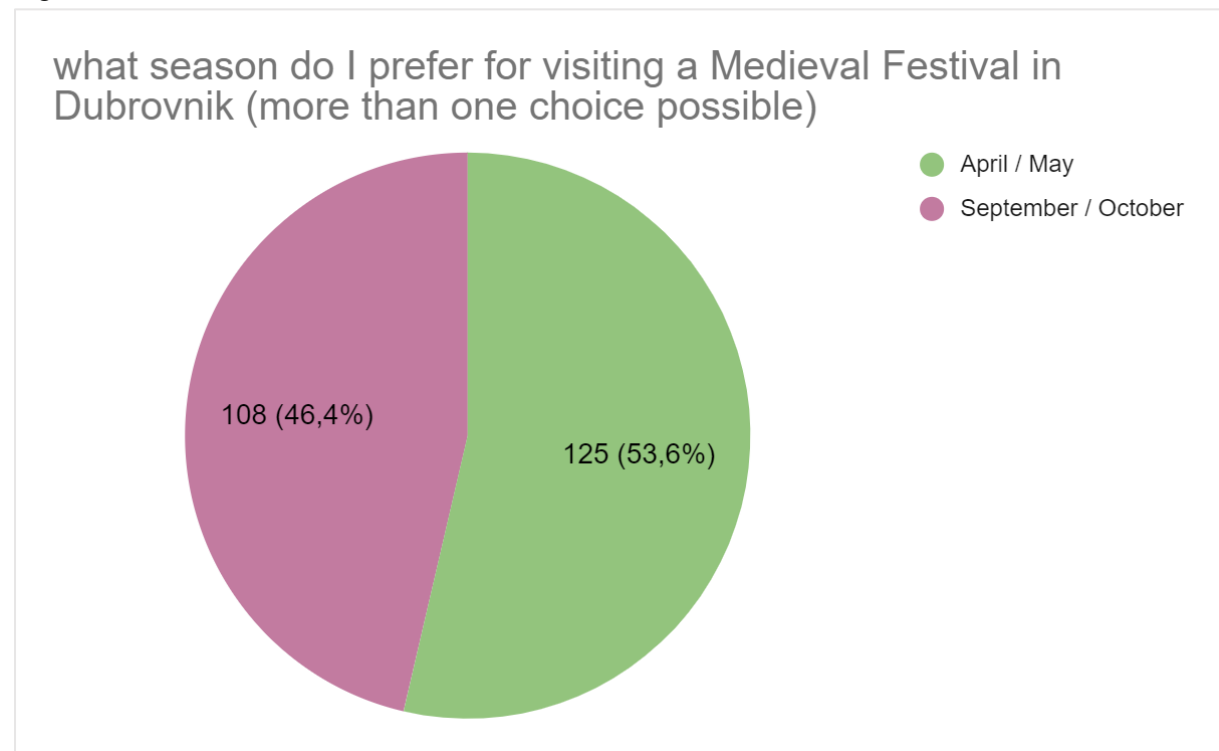


Figure 6

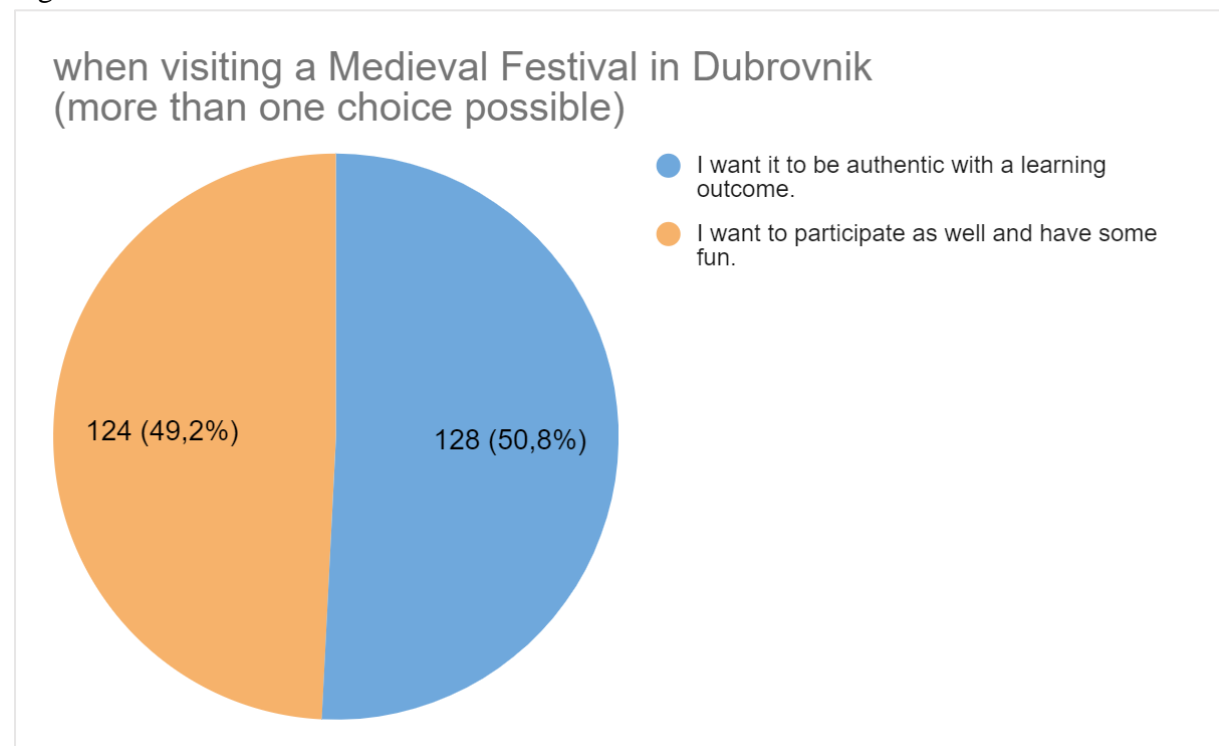


Figure 7

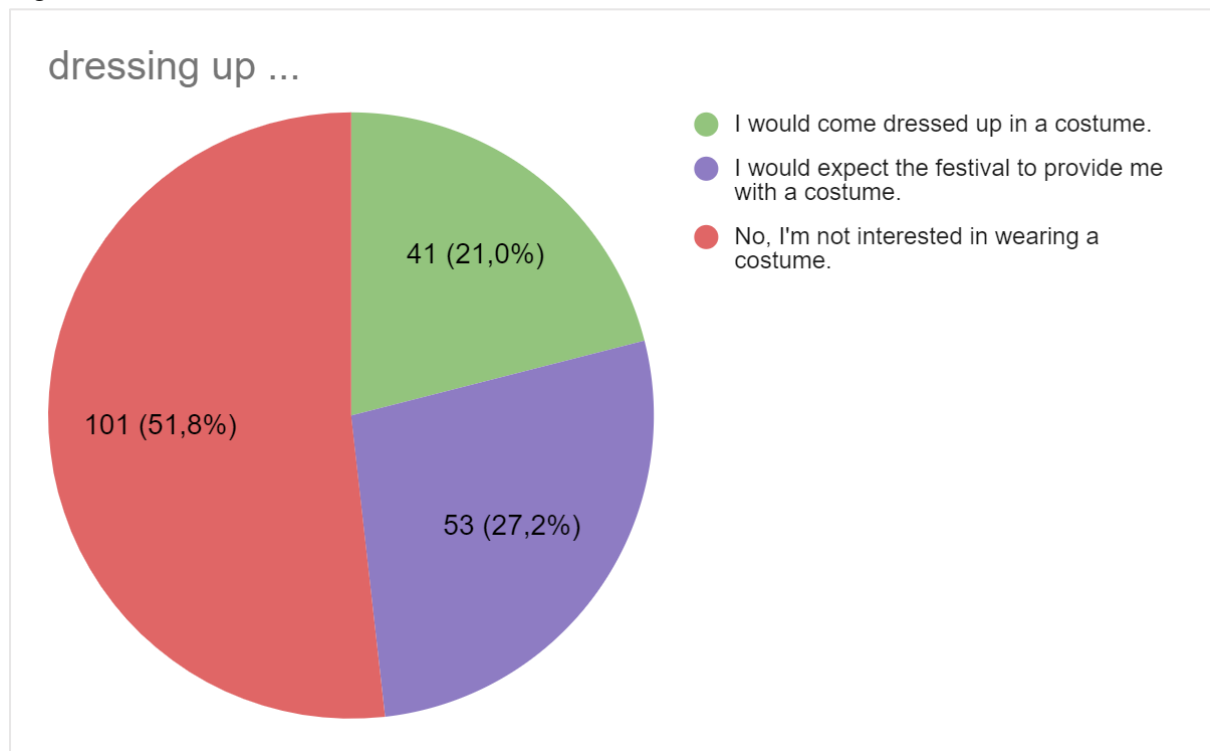


Figure 8

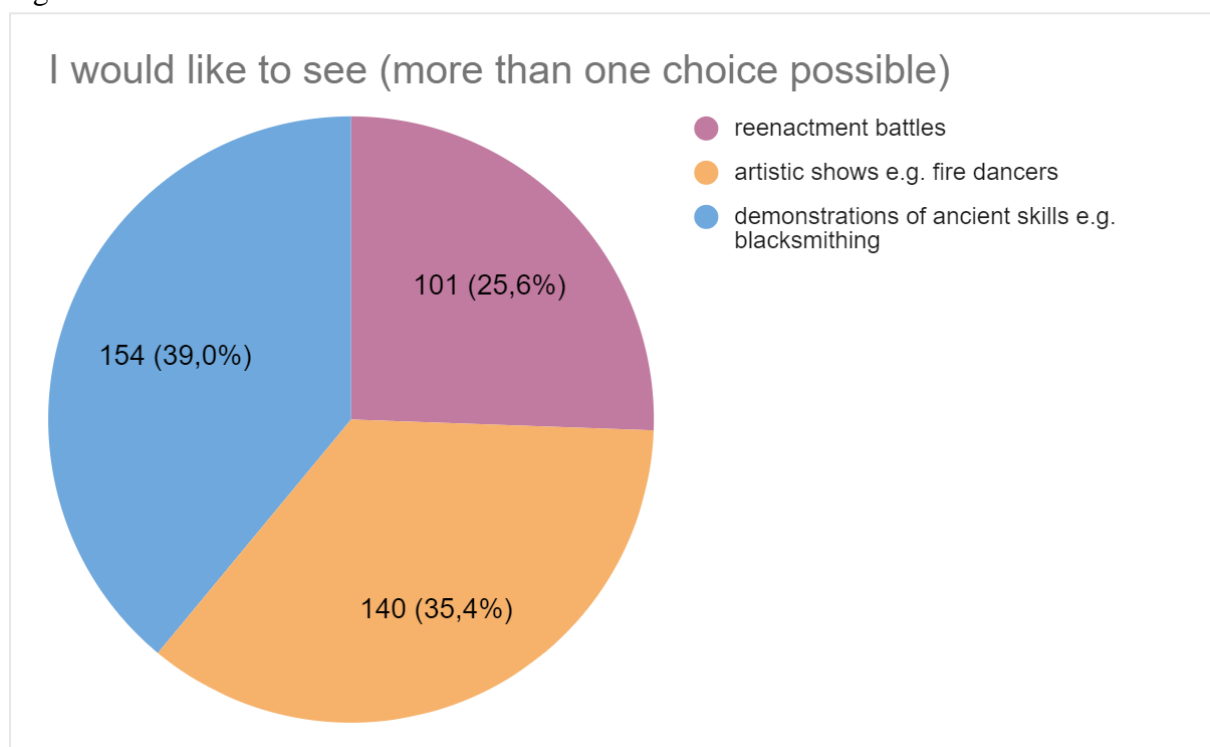


Figure 9

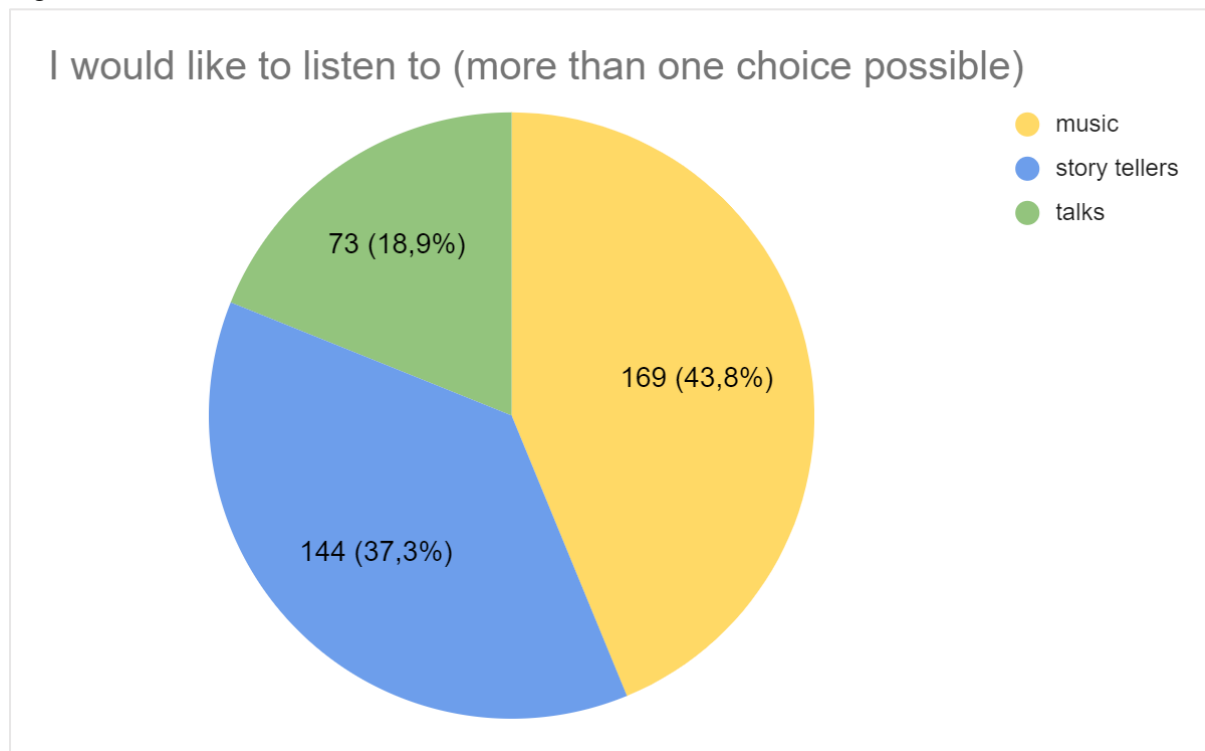


Figure 10

