The Competitiveness of Serbian Tourism in the Region During the Transition Period

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ABSTRACT

The recent inadequate development of tourism in Serbia was conditioned by the poor economic and political situation that affected the state of the nineties of the 20th century. The authors of the paper pointed to the current situation of the separation of tourism in Serbia and the factors that imply its competitive position among the countries of the region. Each of these states was part of the former Yugoslavia together with Serbia, and in that period shared the same destiny of tourism development. The authors used the available statistical documentation and conducted a desk research to point out the existing estimates of the factors of concreteness that would enable tourism with an adequate strategic policy of product development and placement to reach a higher ranking on the regional and world market.

KEYWORDS

Competitiveness, Serbia, Tourism, Transition

INTRODUCTION

After the break-up of the state and all the troubles that Serbia suffered in the nineties, tourism has fallen sharply, which has affected the entire social and economic system of the state. Today, at the time of transition, Serbia’s tourism as an economic activity is gaining an increasingly important place in the economy, and it is characterized by direct and indirect developmental influences on many other branches. Predispositions of the geographical position of Serbia with morphological, hydrological, climatological, biogeographical and anthropogeographical value are of importance for the development of domestic and foreign tourism (Gajic et al., 2010). However, data on the number of tourists and their nights, especially foreign tourists, as well as the realized economic and social effects of tourism, indicate that all these advantages are not sufficiently exploited.

In order for Serbia to be competitive, a tourist destination must offer the market a quality experience and experience that makes it more attractive and competitive than other countries in the region (Gajic et al., 2009). The role of management is to exploit and develop existing resources or to replace the lack of them with clear and efficient strategies for the development of tourism products as well as creating additional value for tourism demand (De Kayser et al., 1994; Simon, 1995; Andrades et al., 2017). What is important for the destination is to measure the indicators on the basis of which conditions will be considered and then improve the competitive position, defining the areas that need to be given special attention during further development of tourism (Chon, 1991; Bramwel et al., 2007; Dwyer et al., 2007). Accordingly, the authors of the paper pointed out their static data on the existing situation and the assessment of competitive factors, as well as the problems that Serbian tourism faced in the transition period.

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MEASURING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

The quantitative assessment of destination competitiveness can be obtained on the basis of data on the annual inflow of tourists, tourism revenue, tourist consumption, number of overnight stays, length of stay. While the qualitative assessment is based on the measurement of the level of satisfaction of tourists, the image and perception of the destination, the quality of facilities and services in tourism, as well as the elements related to the quality of the tourist experience (Pike, 1992; Andrades et al., 2013). The competitive position is, in fact, the performance obtained on the basis of objective statistics, indicating the location of the destination. There are also measurements related to the attractiveness of the destination for visitors. In this context, attractiveness is measured based on the IDA group of indicators based on the assumption that a tourist in the decision-making process connects the different characteristics of the destination with one or more of his beliefs, but in relation to the experience and experience he had during his stay in other destinations. Enright (2004) has proposed the basics of the Competitiveness Model by analyzing eight destinations in the Caribbean.

The proposed model includes five groups of indicators of competitiveness: macroeconomic indicators; indicators on the offer side; indicators related to transport; indicators related to demand; indicators related to tourism policy. The World Economic Forum evaluates competitiveness by measuring the competitiveness index (Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index). The index includes four categories or subindexes, each containing pillars and indicators that are the basic indicators of competitiveness: subindex enabled environment, subindex of tourism policy and enabling conditions, infrastructure subindex, subindex of natural and cultural resources. The competitiveness indicators dealt with in this paper relate to the following segments: human resources and labor market, safety and security, business environment, health and hygiene, information communication technologies, giving priority to tourism, international openness, competitiveness of prices, environmental sustainability, infrastructure of air traffic, road infrastructure and port infrastructure, infrastructure for providing tourist services, natural resources, cultural resources and business trips.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY – PROBLEMS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BEFORE AND AFTER THE BREAK-UP OF THE STATE

Starting from the data of tourism development prior to the war period, as well as the assessment of some of the essential elements of this development, it can be highly assured that tourism (domestic and foreign) has developed strongly, not only as an economic activity, but also had certain implications for the overall economic flows. A large part of these implications had undeniable positive effects on the trends in the national economy (balance of payments, employment, more balanced regional development), and the negative implications of which (insufficiently efficient investments, low productivity of production factors, endangering natural resources and ecological balance) could have a greater impact on the development and stability of the overall economy of the country (Vujko et al., 2014). The mentioned positive and negative implications came in the conditions of extensive, spontaneous, insufficiently designed and inadequate tourism development. The development of tourism in the nineties has run more or less on the brink of total economic trends, of which it has mostly received negative general impulses (inflation, restrictions, etc.). This situation was due to the absence of an appropriate consistent and long-term tourism development policy, but also a policy that would incorporate the development of tourism into clearly defined goals of the general socio-economic development of the country (Kresic et al., 2011). Today, tourism revenue grows from year to year. However, inadequate valorisation of natural and anthropogenic values, poor economic structure, and infrastructure construction slow down the growth of tourism. This branch undoubtedly contributes to the economic development of the country, but also to breaking the negative image of foreign tourists about Serbia. However, what distinguishes tourism from other economic activities is that it never appears as an independent activity, and there is no possibility for determining the tourism
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