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## **Beaches in the Function of Primary Resource of the Beach Tourism Product**

### **Abstract**

Development of tourism in the Republic of Croatia is closely related to bathing tourism. In the beginning, the development of tourism was linked to thermal spas and health resorts and later to coastal areas.

Coastal zones represent a unique geographical area from the prospective of ecology, but also from a prospective of human race development. Coastal zones, especially those in the Mediterranean, are characterized by high population and economic activity which are causing conflicts when it comes to the way of resources usage, intensive land usage, urbanization of the coastal line and ecological degradation.

The Republic of Croatia, as one of the most significant tourism destinations in the Mediterranean, has a long tourism tradition and high development potential. But, what best characterizes the Croatian part of the Adriatic are certainly its well-indented coast, natural attractions and diversity, which all serve the development of tourism and other economic activities.

**Key words:** beaches, tourism, tourism resources, tourism product, beach tourism

### **1. Introduction**

The success of a tourism destination is highly dependent on the quality of its tourism product. The tourism product is based on available resources in the destination. The diversity of tourism resources in a destination is a precondition for the development of selective forms of tourism. When it comes to the bathing tourism, as a selective form of tourism, beaches represent the basic resource. The quality of the bathing tourism product depends on the way the beaches are valorized. The tourism valorization of beach areas must be a reflection of tourist preferences but they must also be in compliance with principles of sustainable development! Only in this way the tourist satisfaction will be achieved together with economical effect.

In the Republic of Croatia, bathing tourism is the dominant selective form of tourism because tourist arrivals are mainly motivated by the sun and rest which are closely related to beach areas. Because of the fact that the Croatian tourism is highly seasonal and related mostly to the summer period, there is a big chance of high pressure of tourists on beach resources. Because of this reason, it is mandatory that the development of beach areas be managed strategically with respect for the sustainable tourism development.

## 2. Beaches as tourism resource

Beaches are a resource which significantly enrich the tourism offer of countries located along coastal areas and river and lake banks. They represent the natural, social and economic (recreational) resource.

Economic lexicon defines resources as a general term for natural and manufactured items, as well as human knowledge and skills that can be used as means of meeting the needs directly in demand, or indirectly in production.

Consequently, Kušen says: "Tourism resources are the collective term for potential and actual tourist attractions, tourist infrastructure and superstructure, for travel agencies, tourist organization of destination, travel personnel and the like."<sup>1</sup> At the same time, real tourist attractions are all attractions that are already tourist valorized and have a tourist function as opposed to potential tourist attractions which represent all those attractions that are not yet in a tourism function, but they have all predispositions to be tourist valorized.

Beaches in tourism represent a highly valuable resource because the beaches are one of the main motives of the trip. Reading different literature, we find definitions of beaches by the authors as following below.

Williams and Micallef<sup>2</sup> define beaches as a cluster of unconsolidated material (eg. sand, gravel, clay or mixtures thereof), which extends from the edge of the mainland beach, which can be slopes of dunes or seawall, to the depths of the sea, where there is no significant movement of sediment.

According to Anić, beach is an area by the sea, river or lake equipped for bathing. The beaches along the rivers and lakes are different from the sea beaches primarily due to the fact that they may be in the regime of ownership which is contrary to the beaches along the coast which belong to the maritime domain. Maritime domain is a common good, which means that it is not and cannot be in the regime of ownership and is a good out of traffic (*res extracommercium*)<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> E. Kušen: Turistička atrakcijska osnova, časopis Turizam 3/2000, Institut za turizam, Zagreb, 2002., p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> A. Williams, A. Micallef: Beach Management: Principle&Practice, EartscanPublicationsLtd., London, 2009. p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> B. Kundih: Hrvatsko pomorsko dobro u teoriji i praksi, Hrvatski hidrografski institut, Rijeka, 2005., p. 11.

The manual for the protection of the coast issued by Engineers US Army Corps defines beach as: "The field of unconsolidated material that extends from the low-water line to the inland up to places where there are obvious changes in material or physiographic forms, or to the line of permanent vegetation (usually this is the line where storm waves can reach). The sea border of the beach - unless otherwise specified - means lower water line."<sup>4</sup>

Types of beaches can be determined taking into account a wide range of physical, natural and anthropogenic determinants, which, among other things, may include the physics of the sea, phytogenic composition of sediments, color, shape, stability, degree of preservation of natural habitats and species, the degree of naturalness, use and environment of beach and similar. Taking into account the recreational characteristics of beaches, the Law on Spatial Planning and Construction in Article 53 divides the beaches in:<sup>5</sup>

- regulated sea beach inside or outside the settlements supervised and accessible to all on equal terms from the land and sea including persons with reduced mobility, mostly with decorated and altered natural features and infrastructure and content (showers, cabins and sanitary), regulated land area directly connected to the sea, marked and protected from the sea
- natural sea beach inside or outside the settlements supervised and accessible from land and / or sea-side infrastructural unequipped, fully preserved natural features.

Considering the beaches in the context of the tourism product, essential features are beach access, facilities on the beach ... which is largely dependent on the quality of beaches, and that affects the pleasure of tourists. In this sense, it is necessary to state the five basic types of beaches on the basis of the BARE technique<sup>6</sup>:

1. Remote beaches are generally poorly available (mostly by boat or on foot - at least 300 m walk). They may be near or at the edge of the rural or, sometimes, village (local) areas, but never urban. There is no public transport organized leading to these beaches.
2. Rural beaches are located outside urban / local communities. They cannot be reached by public transport, but there are access roads and can be reached by car. These beaches have practically no service industries.
3. The local beaches are located outside major urban areas and associated with a small but constant population that has access to organized service

<sup>4</sup> Priručnik za zaštitu obale Inženjerijskog korpusa vojske SAD (1981.:A3), u: Gaće, I., op.cit., str.19.

<sup>5</sup> Zakon o prostornom uređenju i gradnji, Narodne novine 23/04, 101/04, 39/06, 63/08, 125/10 i 83/12

<sup>6</sup> Održivo upravljanje plažama u Republici Hrvatskoj, Smjernice i prioritetne akcije, Program Ujedinjenih naroda za razvoj, Zagreb, 2013., str. 5.

industries which are, however, smaller volume, such as primary school (one or more), the religious center (one or more) and stores. The local beaches can also be found within the “tourist / apartment complex” or campsites, which are mainly used in the summer months. Local beaches can be reached by public transport or by car.

4. City (urban) beaches are located in the urban area which serves the large population with well-organized service industries such as primary schools, religious centers, banks, post office, internet cafes, and well-marked central business district. Near the city beaches commercial activities such as fishing port and marina can be found. In general, entrance to the town beach is free.
5. Resort beach is a beach which makes technical-technological whole of an accommodation object and has four distinctive features <sup>7</sup>:
  - The beach is nearby accommodation facilities and the majority of its customers are guests of these objects;
  - Beach management is responsible for the aforementioned tourist resort - including cleaning of the beach, ensuring a wide range of recreational offers and services - lounge chairs, pedal boats, jet skis, “para-sailing”, surfing, a variety of activities that include towing boat (hoop, “banana”, water skiing), sailing and diving - and Cafes / Restaurants for users of the beach.
  - The vast majority of users use the beach for recreational purposes, and not just for vacation (swimming / sunbathing)
  - Entrance to the beach can be charged (which can be arranged so that the day use of the beach is charged).

Round the world, beaches are a significant source of revenue and in recent years in the Republic of Croatia there has been also growing interest in the optimal use of beaches in order to achieve two major objectives: increasing tourist satisfaction and maximizing the economic impact. In this regard, Croatian Ministry of Tourism adopted in December 2014 an action plan for the National program of management and planning of sea beaches. In the program, the following beach themes were developed according to the target group: beaches for families with children, urban promenade beach, beaches with entertainment for young people, romantic beaches, beaches with sports and recreational facilities, beaches for surfers, diving beaches, adrenaline beaches, nudist beaches, dog beaches, party beaches, eco beaches, cultural and resort or hotel beaches.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

<sup>8</sup> Nacionalni program upravljanja i uređenja morskih plaža, Akcijski plan, Ministarstvo turizma Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb, 2014, p 25.

### 3. Bathing tourism as a selective form of tourism

Selective forms of tourism appeared as part of a systematic macro strategic development turn in tourism. In literature, there appear different terms: tourism of special interests, specific forms of tourism or alternative tourism, and they were formed in response to the mass tourism to minimize the negative impacts of mass tourism, and to improve the tourism product. The negative effects of mass tourism are reflected in the growth of tourism infrastructure and superstructure, changes in the economic structure of the area, endangered flora and fauna, local air pollution and reduced water quality, through an improper transformation of tourist sites and regions, and through the pressure on the local community in terms of social and cultural impacts. The most important difference is that in the mass tourism the tourist as an individual is not recognized, while in the selective tourism a tourist-individual is in focus<sup>9</sup>. Selective tourism is based on the "selection program, the responsible behavior of all participants, the environmental and economic principle of balanced development, the quality of service, on direct identity and humanity of services, all with desirable and legislative and balanced ratio of the number of tourists and the number of local residents in a particular area"<sup>10</sup>. Selective forms of tourism encourage the regional tourism development concept, which replaces the previous concept of the planned macro management. In this concept, offer by providers of some selective tourism type develops their tourism products using comparative advantages of the receptive destination resources.

Selective tourism is a synthetic and generic term describing a new quality of modern and future tourism and is based on a selection of programs, on responsible behavior of all participants, on environmental and economic principle of balanced development, on quality of service, on original identity and humanity of services, and all with desirable and legislative and balanced ratio of the number of tourists and local residents in a particular area.<sup>11</sup>

Bathing tourism is today mostly known as a massive form of tourism, but with beaches thematisation and with putting in tourist function beaches that still belong to the potential attractions there will develop a completely new understanding of this type of tourism.

The bases for the development of bathing tourism are beaches. The formation of beaches from potential attraction to the quality tourism product is a very complex process. Beaches as a tourism product have to dispose of:

1. quality contents on the beach
2. high quality of the sea.

<sup>9</sup> Luković, T., *Selektivni turizam: Hir ili istraživačka potreba*, Acta Turistica Nova, Utilus - visoka poslovna škola Zagreb, Zagreb, 2008., p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Pančić Kombol, T, *Selektivni turizam – uvod u menadžment prirodnih i kulturnih resursa*, TMPC Sagena, Matulji, 2000., p. 92

<sup>11</sup> Jadrešić, V., *Europski i hrvatski turizam – od masovnog prema selektivnom ili održivom turizmu, Temeljni procesi i tendencije u hrvatskom turizmu*, Hotelijerski fakultet Opatija, 1998., p. 181.

#### a) Beach contents

In order to improve the offer on beaches, the Ministry of Tourism has defined, in the National Program for Management and Planning of beaches, the minimum technical requirements and special elements for all themed beaches. The minimum contents for each individual beach theme have been prescribed. By meeting the individual elements, the quality of beaches (as the tourism product) is raised.

#### b) Sea quality

The Republic of Croatia belongs to the group of countries with the best quality of bathing water in Europe, as shown in the report of the European Environment Agency and the European Commission on the quality of bathing water in 27 member states of the EU, Croatia and Switzerland. Every year before the start of the vacation season, the European Commission publishes the report on the quality of bathing water with the data from the previous season. The European Environment Agency collects on the annual basis the data on water quality on over 22,000 beaches, of which more than two-thirds relate to the beaches along the coast and the rest are beaches on river and lake banks. The data include the amount of bacteria from waste waters and living organisms. Out of 912 sea beaches in the Republic of Croatia for which the data were collected, 876 or 96.1% had the water of excellent quality, 26 of them had a satisfactory quality, and only three were of poor quality, and there were no beaches where swimming was prohibited, and for seven beaches there was not enough data.<sup>12</sup> In December 2000, the EU Commission has adopted a Communication for the European Parliament and the Council on the development of a new policy on the quality of bathing water and initiated extensive consultations with all interested and involved parties. The main outcome of this consultation was general support for developing a new Directive based on the latest scientific evidence and paying particular attention to the participation of the general public.

The Directive defines the dispositions for the monitoring and classification of bathing water quality, control of bathing water quality and informing the public on bathing water quality. Table 1 lists beaches that met the standards under which they have been awarded the Blue Flag in 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Droždan, K. Hrvatska kupališta među najkvalitetnijima u Europi, <http://www.jutarnji.hr> (20.02.2014.)

*Table 1. Number of Blue flags in Croatia in the period from 1998 up to 2015*

Year	Number of flags
1998	1
1999	13
2000	22
2001	29
2002	48
2003	73
2004	98
2005	111
2006	121
2008	146
2009	135
2010	135
2011	135
2012	124
2013	120
2014	117
2015	115

*Source: Development of the author*

In the Republic of Croatia, there were 115 blue flags awarded in 2015, of which 95 Blue Flags were awarded for beaches and 20 Blue Flags awarded for marinas.

#### **4. Bathing tourism in the Republic of Croatia**

In April 2013, the Croatian Government adopted the Strategy of Development of Croatian Tourism by 2020 in which they highlighted the dominant product groups for Croatia, among which is the product of sun and sea. The strategy defined the following desired position of the products sun and the sea: “The development and growth of products ‘sun and sea’ is based on a conserved spatial comparative advantages, but also

on the development of a substantially richer and higher quality, according to customer needs profiled offers, a variety of man-made attractions, sports and entertainment. The intensification of sales and promotional efforts results in higher utilization and improved price positioning of all types of accommodation in April-October period and especially in June to September period.<sup>13</sup>

The following table shows the motives of tourist arrivals in Croatia in the period from 2001 up to 2014. The table shows that the main motive for the arrival of tourists in Croatia is rest and relaxation on the coast, which means that the beaches are still the most important resource tourism product. When considering the period of 2001 to 2014, it can be noted that the trend of the main motif (rest and relaxation) decreases. This points to the fact that, next to the sun, sea and beach, tourists want additional contents. Although the trend of the main motives declines, its share will continue to be the largest.

*Table 2. Motives of tourist arrivals in the Republic of Croatia*

Motives	2001	2004	2007	2010	2014
Rest and relaxation close to the sea / passive relaxation	91,10%	66,70%	61,60%	75,10%	75%
Entertainment	36,10%	42,50%	43,30%	44,10%	43%
Exploring natural attractions	32,50%	24,40%	26,10%	20,90%	20%
New experiences and adventures	20,20%	24,60%	25,50%	25,30%	30%
Close distance of the destination	9,80%	67,00%	9,20%	-	-
Exploring cultural attractions and events	7,50%	6,00%	9,80%	7,10%	7,0%
Sports, recreation and fitness	7,10%	8,80%	10,20%	8,30%	6,8%
Affordable prices	6,50%	7,90%	11,30%	-	-

13 Strategija razvoja turizma Republike Hrvatske do 2020.g., Ministarstvo turizma, Institut za turizam, Zagreb, 2013., str.37.



Motives	2001	2004	2007	2010	2014
Visiting relatives or friends	6,20%	6,00%	8,30%	8,60%	6,10%
Health reasons	4,20%	5,10%	5,00%	4,70%	5,0%
Diving	3,10%	3,00%	6,30%	3,60%	3,20%
Other motives	1,60%	2,10%	0,90%	3,20%	0,50%
Business obligations	1,10%	1,30%	1,20%	0,80%	0,90%
Shopping	0,60%	1,50%	2,50%	2,30%	1,1%
Enjoying food and drinks / gastronomy	-	19,40%	19,60%	21,90%	26%
Religious reasons	-	0,20%	0,70%	0,30%	0,20%

*Source: processing of the author according to: TOMAS 2001 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2002, TOMAS 2004 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2005, TOMAS 2007 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2008, TOMAS 2010 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2011, TOMAS 2014 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2015.*

Apart from motivation, it is also important to explore activities of tourists in the tourist destination. The following table shows the activities of tourists in Croatia in the period from 2001 up to 2014. The table shows that almost all tourists (98.9%) in the destination use beaches as the basic product. That was created as a result of previously analyzed motivation (where the largest share of tourists was motivated by beaches).

Table 3. Tourist activities while staying in Republic of Croatia in 2014

Rang	Tourist activities while staying in destination	2014 in %
1.	Swimming and bathing	98,9
2.	Visiting coffee shops, ice-cream shops..	94,5
3.	Visiting restaurants	91,3
4.	Walks in the nature	78,3
5.	Shopping	68,6
6.	Sightseeing	65,0
7.	A visit to the local parties	56,6
8.	Dancing or disco	43,8
9.	Visiting national parks	38,0
10.	Diving	37,0
11.	Health-recreational and wellness programs	36,1
12.	Visiting museums and exhibitions	34,9
13.	Water sports	33,9
14.	Bike ride	33,2
15.	Visiting concerts	30,7
16.	Tour of the wine roads (winery)	27,7
17.	A visit to the theater and performances	23,1
18.	Fishing	21,4
19.	Tennis	21,1
20.	Tour of the roads of olive oil	20,6
21.	Bird watch	15,3
22.	Adrenalin sports	14,3

Rang	Tourist activities while staying in destination	2014 in %
23.	Mountaineering	12,6
24.	Golf	8,0
25.	Horse riding	6,8

Source: *TOMAS 2014 Stavovi i potrošnja turista u Hrvatskoj*, Institut za turizam, Zagreb 2015.

In forming a quality beach product, product of bathing tourism, it must be borne in mind that beaches are a limited resource on one hand, while on the other hand, the number of tourists is constantly increasing.

Croatian coast stretches over a total length of 5835 km, of which the mainland coastline is 1778 km long and 4057 km belong to island coasts. Numerous coves, bays and peninsulas, 66 inhabited and 652 uninhabited islands and hundreds of smaller islands, reefs and cliffs make the natural wealth of Croatia which calls for proper evaluation. The Republic of Croatia has the total length of the coast ahead of all Adriatic states (74%), and has an indented coastline (coefficient of 11.10 - second in the world) and a large number of islands (1246), what makes it, along with Greece, the first in the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup>

The following table shows the number of tourists in Croatia in the period from 2011 up to 2014.

Table 4. Number of tourists in the Republic of Croatia

Year	Number of tourists
2011	11.455.677
2012	11.834.975
2013	12.441.476
2014	13.128.000

Source: *www.mint.hr*

The table shows that the number of tourists increases. The increase in the number of tourists means more and more pressure on beach areas. On one hand, this represents a great danger from destruction of beach areas, their devastation as well as higher

<sup>14</sup> Kovačić, M. Upravljanje plažama u Hrvatskoj – pitanja i dileme, <http://www.pomorskodobro.com> (13.03.2014.)

risk of pollution of the sea. On the other hand, there is a risk of reduced quality of the bathing tourism product.

## **5. Conclusion**

Beaches in Croatia are the most important resource of the bathing tourism product, and it will also be so in the future. Bathing tourism is the most important form of tourism in Croatia, because tourists have been coming, and in the future they will mainly keep coming because of the sun, beach and relaxation. Bathing tourism is linked to mass tourism and to all those negativities caused by excessive pressure from the number of tourists on beach areas. That is why the Strategy of development of tourism in the Republic of Croatia and with the Croatian National Action Plan of managing and planning of beaches seek to valorize the potential beach areas in order to increase the number of named and arranged beaches and thus to reduce the pressure on existing beach facilities. In this way, the beaches would be managed toward maximizing the bathing tourism product quality and achieving greater economic impact. With setting the beach themes for particular target groups of tourists, the product quality of beach tourism will be increased because tourists will be arriving to the destination depending on their preferences to use those beaches that suit their needs best. The number of tourists in Croatia is increasing and it is expected that the trend will continue, while the beach areas are fixed factors in a specific destination and cannot be changed. Therefore, there is increasing pressure of the number of tourists on beach areas that could be alleviated by increasing the number of valorized beaches, but this should be approached strategically and with respect for principles of sustainable development.

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Zrinka Zadel

## **Plaže u funkciji osnovnog resursa proizvoda kupališnog turizma**

### **Sažetak**

Razvoj turizma u Republici Hrvatskoj vezan je uz kupališni turizam. U počecima, razvoj turizma se vezuje uz toplice i lječilišta, a zatim uz obalna područja.

Obalna područja predstavljaju jedinstveni geografski prostor s aspekta ekologije, ali i ljudskog razvoja. Obalne zone, posebno one na Mediteranu, karakterizira visoka koncentracija populacije i ekonomskih aktivnosti koje uzrokuju konflikte oko načina upotrebe resursa, intenzivnog korištenja zemljišta, urbanizacije, artificijelizacije obalne linije te ekološke degradacije. Republika Hrvatska, kao jedna od najznačajnijih turističkih destinacija na Mediteranu, ima dugu turističku tradiciju i velike razvojne mogućnosti. Ipak, ono što ponajviše karakterizira hrvatski dio Jadrana su velika razvedenost obale, prirodne ljepote i raznolikost, koja pogoduje razvoju turizma i drugim gospodarskim djelatnostima.

**Ključne riječi:** plaže, turizam, turistički resurs, turistički proizvod, kupališni turizam