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STRATEGIC TOURISM MARKETING OF C.E.I. COUNTRIES - BASIC FRAMEWORK

UDK: 338.48:658.8
Received: 17th May, 1996
Preliminary reports

Political changes in Europe at the end of the 80's have resulted in the establishment of the Central European Initiative as an international regional association. Interests in cooperation in the field of tourism can be explained by the fact that the majority of Central European countries have significant cultural, historical and natural resources which are not sufficiently used. The Working Group for Tourism, which has been led by Croatia since 1993, made a decision to conduct research with the main aim of determining basic tourism indicators as a basis for developing a common tourism marketing strategy. This paper presents the research methodology and discusses the main survey results.

Key words: strategic marketing, tourism marketing, destination marketing, tourism strategic marketing plan, Central Europe, Central European Initiative

1. INTRODUCTION

Processes of global and regional cooperation and communication are being increasingly emphasized in modern social and political movements throughout the world. The decline of bloc systems has resulted in development of integration processes in Europe. The political changes at the end of the 80's have resulted in the establishment of the Central European Initiative as an international regional association which includes ten member countries (Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Republic of Slovak, and Slovenia) and five associate members (Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Ukraine and White-Russia).

A multilateral approach to cooperation is of great importance in Central European countries in which tourism represents an economy push factor, and also stimulates development of many other activities. Interests in cooperation in the field of tourism can be explained by the fact that the majority of Central European countries have significant cultural, historical and natural resources which have not yet been put to sufficient or desired use in tourism.

The practical activities of the C.E.I. member countries have been carried out through individual projects within 13 activity groups including the Working Group for Tourism, which has been led by Croatia since 1993. Due to an expressed mutual interest

and a need to intensify cooperation, a decision to conduct research was made at the beginning of 1996. The main research objective was to determine the basic indicators of the level of tourism development in C.E.I. countries as well as a basis for developing a common tourism marketing strategy. The paper discusses project methodology and key results published in more detail elsewhere [1, 1-46].

2. BACKGROUND

Due to globalization process throughout the world and in various fields (transportation, technology, tourism) competition among tourism destinations is increasing daily. Tourism literature review reveals more and more articles, chapters in handbooks and handbooks themselves dealing with destination marketing and management or some of its functions [2, 1-226; 3, 1-271; 4, 95-96; 5, 37-45; 6, 11-35; 7, 23-40; 8, 63-67; 9, 11-17; 10, 209-225]. Based on elementary marketing principles discovered and developed earlier [11, 1-794], authors worldwide are trying to formulate successful tourism marketing postulates for the highly competitive tourism market [12, 21-36; 13, 3-7; 14, 2-7].

Apart from tourism marketing background explained in tourism literature, this study also benefited from the practical experiences of similar international regional associations. As one of the most important sources of revenue and employment, tourism has become a subject of cooperation between many European countries. In addition to the European Travel Commission [15, 1-36] which was established 46 years ago and now includes 27 countries, Alpe-Adria [16, 1-177] and the Danube Tourist Commission have also been acting successfully within the area of tourism in Europe. Cooperation between the members of these associations and implementation of individual marketing activities has been based on a common interest. These experiences have also been used for developing basic elements of tourism marketing strategy of the C.E.I. countries.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the conducted study was to formulate and design a common strategic tourism marketing concept for all C.E.I. member countries. The project's general aims are:

- to put into value the underused natural and cultural heritage sights
- to improve the quality of tourism facilities and services
- to protect and improve the natural resources and
- to increase tourism receipts.

Specific aims are:

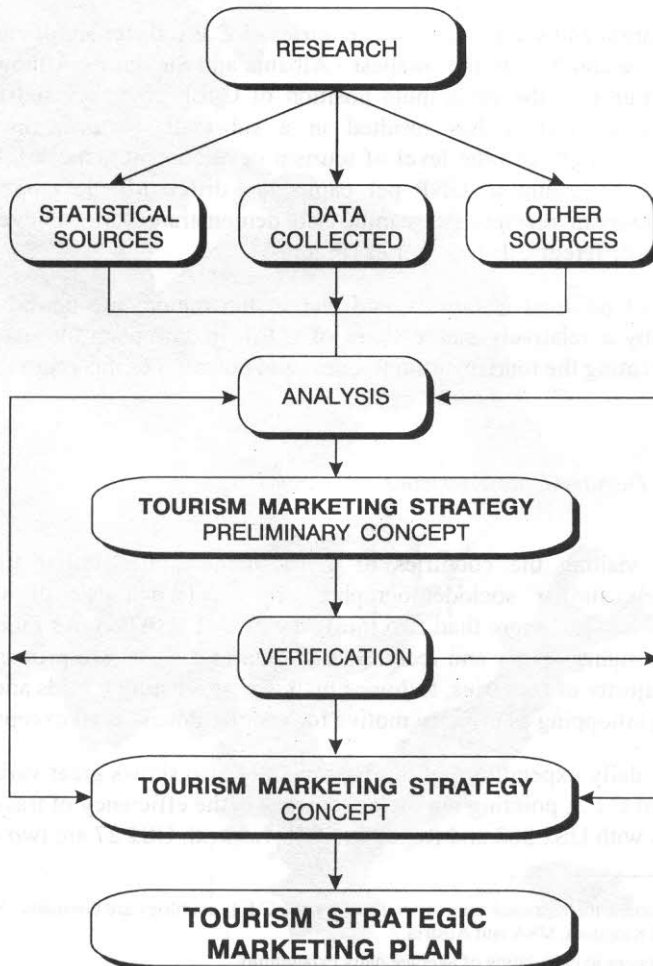
- to position CENTRAL EUROPE as a tourism destination ("Heart of Europe") on the world tourism market and
- to evoke, stimulate and strengthen the image of CENTRAL EUROPE as the most attractive and unique ("Most European") destination.

4. PROJECT/RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As shown in Figure 1. the research was based on three data sources: statistical sources [17, 18], data collected by questionnaire, formulated and mailed, and other sources (e.g. printed promotional materials of the C.E.I. countries). The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions comprising five groups (tourism trends and development, guests' travel characteristics, tourism products and main attractions, tourism promotion and opportunities and threats for tourism development). All C.E.I. members and associate member countries completed the mailed questionnaire (except White-Russia) and checked the results of the first output of the data tabulating process.

Based on the analysis, the Preliminary concept of Tourism Marketing Strategy was formulated and presented on the meeting of the C.E.I. Working Group of Tourism and

Figure 1. Project phases



on the Ministerial meeting, both held in Zagreb (May, 1996). The Concept was verified and the decision to continue the work with the main goal to develop a final version of the concept and then to proceed with work on Tourism Strategic Marketing Plan of C.E.I. countries, as the next project phase, was expressed by the majority of representatives of the C.E.I. member as well as associate member countries.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

General Tourism Market Indicators

In population and surface area the countries of C.E.I. differ significantly (from the biggest - Ukraine and Italy to the smallest - Albania and Slovenia). Although situated in the "heart of Europe", the geographic position of C.E.I. countries and their different roles in European history has resulted in a substantial impact on their overall socioeconomic strength and the level of tourism development achieved. Economies of these countries according to GNP per capita are differently developed (Figure 2); indicators of tourism receipts per capita also demonstrate various levels of tourism development in different C.E.I. countries (Figure 3).

In spite of political instability and war in the region, the period 1990-1994 is characterized by a relatively stable share of C.E.I. in European international tourism (Figure 4) indicating the tourism attractiveness and potential of this region.

Tourism Demand Characteristics

Tourists visiting the countries of C.E.I. demonstrate similar travel behavior indicating their similar sociodemographic origin¹. Two thirds of visitors arrive individually (74%) and more than two thirds travel by car (87%). As Figure 5 indicates natural beauty sights, sports and recreation and cultural sights are primary motives for visiting the majority of countries, followed by business, visiting friends and relatives and health reasons (shopping as primary motive for visiting Poland is an exception).

Average daily expenditure of tourists² in 1994 also shows great variation between the countries of C.E.I. pointing out the differences in the efficiency of travel and tourism industry (Italy with US\$ 282 and Republic of Slovak with US\$ 27 are two extremes).

1 The most important international tourism markets for the C.E.I. countries are Germany, Netherlands, Italy, France, United Kingdom, USA and Austria.

2 Possible differences in calculating of average daily expenditure.

Figure 2.

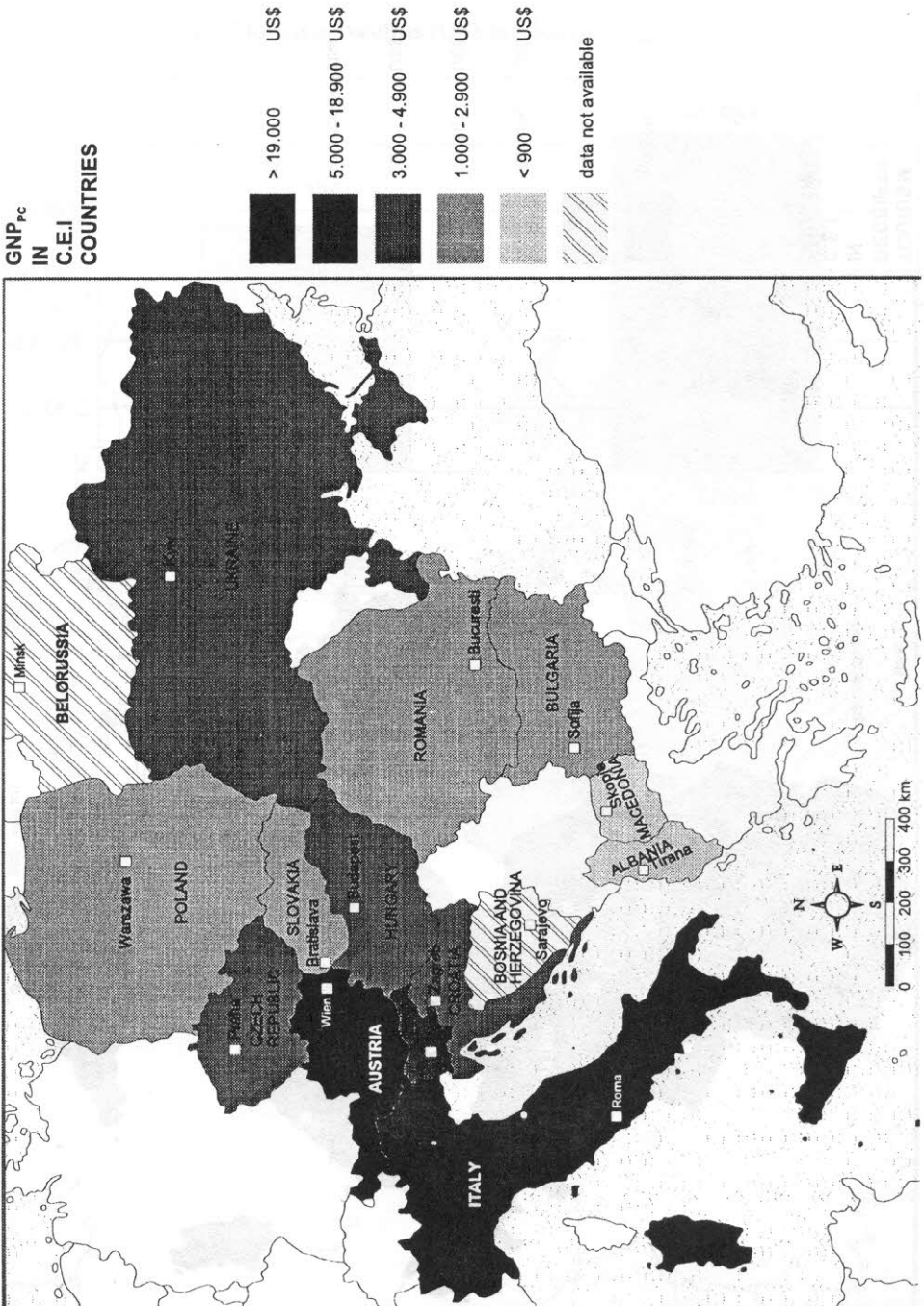


Figure 3.

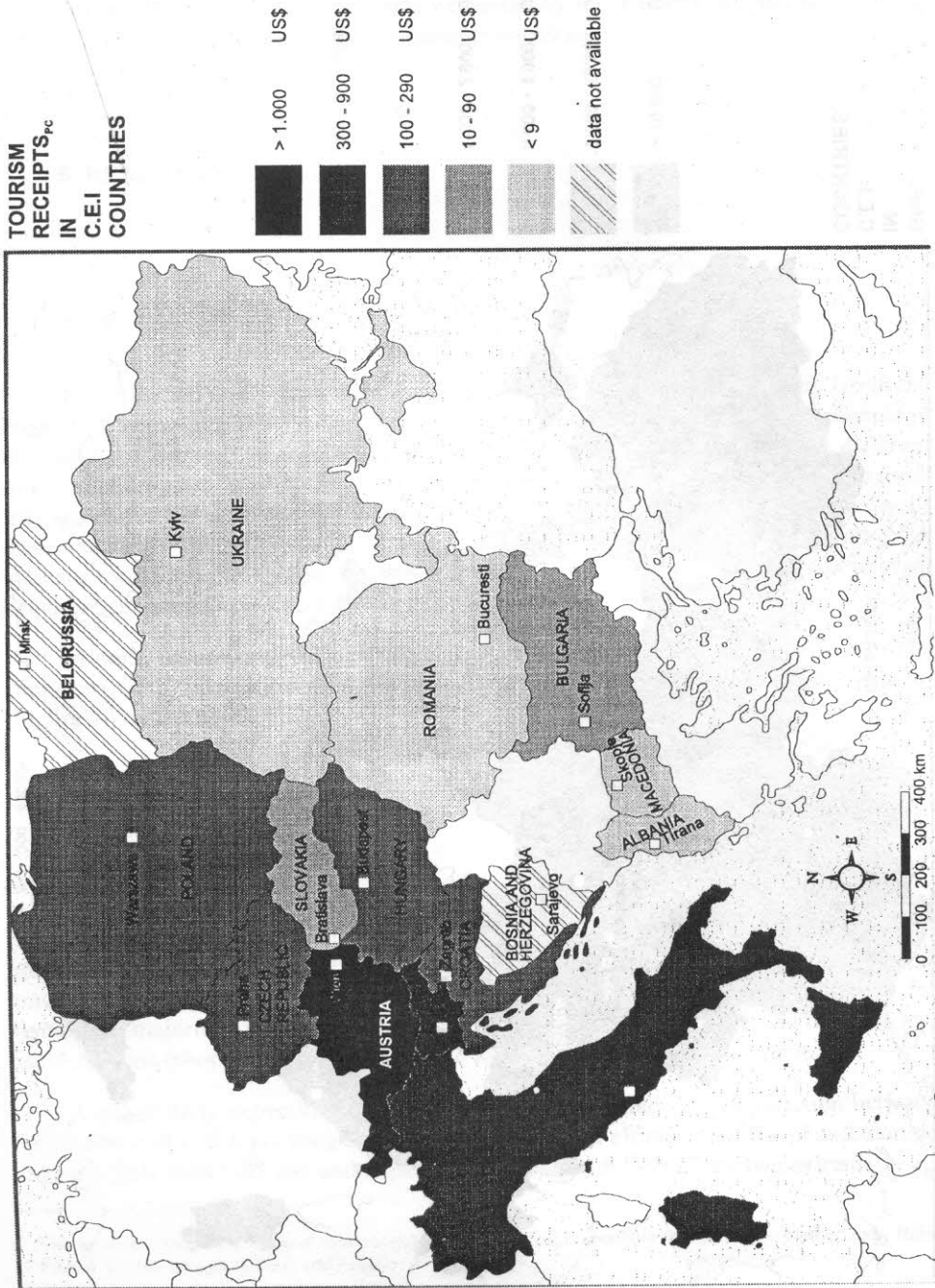
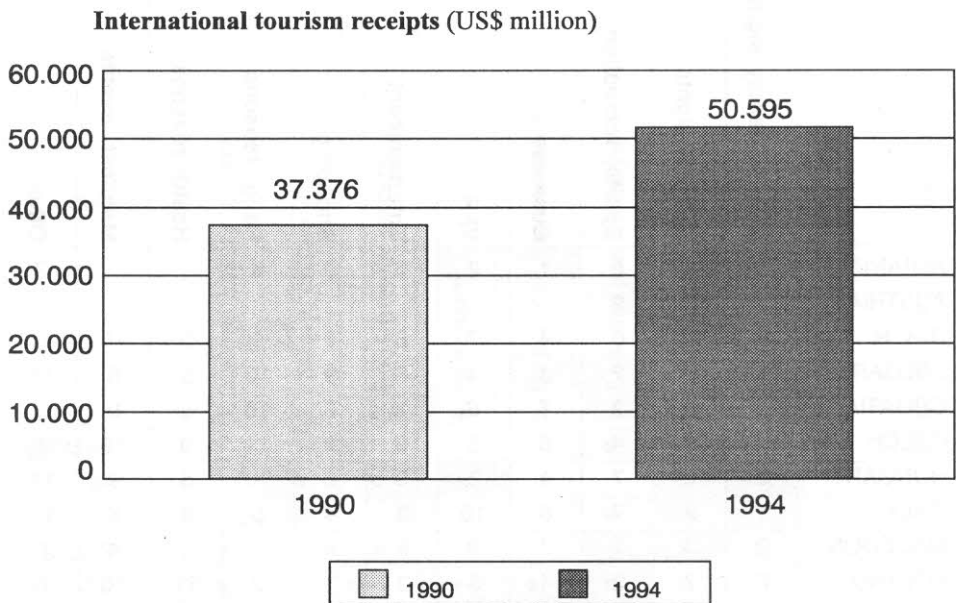


Figure 4. International tourism receipts – the CEI countries in 1990 and 1994



Share of the CEI countries in Europe (in %)

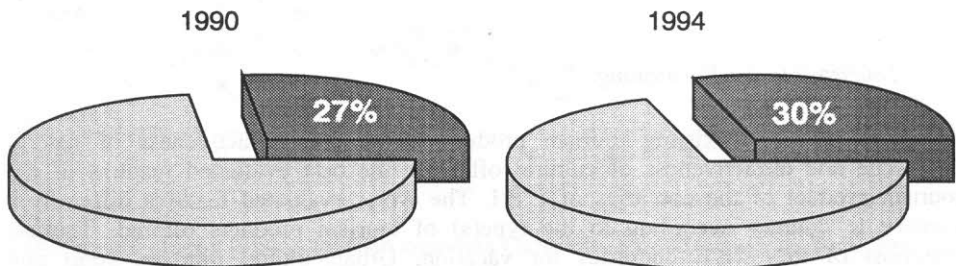


Figure 5. Motives for visiting the country in 1994

Country	Natural beauty sights	Cultural sights	Sports, recreation	Business	VFR	Entertainment	Shopping	Relig. reasons	Health reasons	Manifest. events	Other
ALBANIA	3	4	5	1	2	6	9	8			7
AUSTRIA	1	3	2								
B & H	2	3	6	4	7	8	9	1	5	10	11
BULGARIA	1	7	2	3	4	8	9	10	5	6	11
CROATIA	1	4	3	7	6	2	8	10	5	9	11
CZECH R.	1	3	4	6	5	8	2	11	9	10	7
HUNGARY	1	2	7	4	3	8	6	10	5	9	11
ITALY	1	2	7	6	10	3	4	5	9	8	11
MACEDON.	2	3	1	7	9	6	8			4	5
POLAND	6	7	2	4	5	3	1	9	11	10	8
ROMANIA	6	5	1	2	3	10	8	9	4	7	11
SLOVAKIA	2	3	1	6	4	8	5	9	7	10	11
SLOVENIA	1	3	6	5	7	2	10	11	8	9	4
UKRAINE	3	1	4						2		
CEI - rank	1.	3.	2.	4.	5.	7.	8.	10.	6.	9.	11.

Tourism Market Positioning

Evaluation of existing tourism product shows that attractiveness of natural landscape and attractiveness of cultural offer are the best evaluated features of the tourism product of the countries of C.E.I. The worst evaluated features differ from country to country according to the type(s) of tourism products offered. Tourists visit most of the C.E.I. countries for vacation. Urban/cultural tourism, sport and recreation and health tourism according to the number of overnights are "second" most developed tourism types.

Although the countries of C.E.I. do not share a common image as a tourism region, images of individual countries expressed in key words show significant unanimity. Most of the countries associated their image with natural beauty and unpolluted environment (sun and sea, spas), history, culture and art, and hospitality (Figure 6).

According to the world tourism forecasts (WTO) the last half of the 90's decade should be a bright period in the history of world tourism. Italy, Austria and Poland are among top tourism destinations in Europe; most of the generating countries of the C.E.I.

Figure 6. Evaluation of current images (in key words)

Country	1. Natural beauty, diversity	2. History, culture and art	3. Spas (health resorts)	4. Hospitality	5. Unpolluted environment	6. Sun and sea holidays	7. Good climate	8. Tradition, customs	9. Reasonable prices	10. Mystery, adventure and excitement
ALBANIA						•				•
AUSTRIA		•	•	•				•		
B & H		•				•				
BULGARIA	•		•			•	•			
CROATIA	•			•	•	•	•			
CZECH REP.		•	•		•					
HUNGARY	•	•	•	•						
ITALY	•	•	•	•			•	•		
MACEDONIA	•				•					
POLAND	•	•	•							
ROMANIA	•	•								
SLOVAKIA	•	•	•	•						
SLOVENIA	•				•				•	
UKRAINE										
CEI	9	8	7	5	4	4	3	2	1	1

countries are among the top tourism spenders Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Netherlands and Austria.

According to the main tourism market trends tourism of the countries of C.E.I. has a great opportunity on the world tourism market and a great potential for further development and growth. The main features of the existing tourism products of the countries of C.E.I. are well tuned to the preferences of potential tourism consumers [19].

Using a simple model - positioning triangle (Figure 7), CENTRAL EUROPE as a tourism destination should position itself on the tourism market as a region with great diversity of cultural sights and natural beauty, along with regional ambiance and atmosphere. To develop diverse, future common tourism products, different quality of

Figure 7. Positioning triangle of the CEI countries



tourism facilities and services - a potential drawback, should be unified, i.e. common standards have to be established.

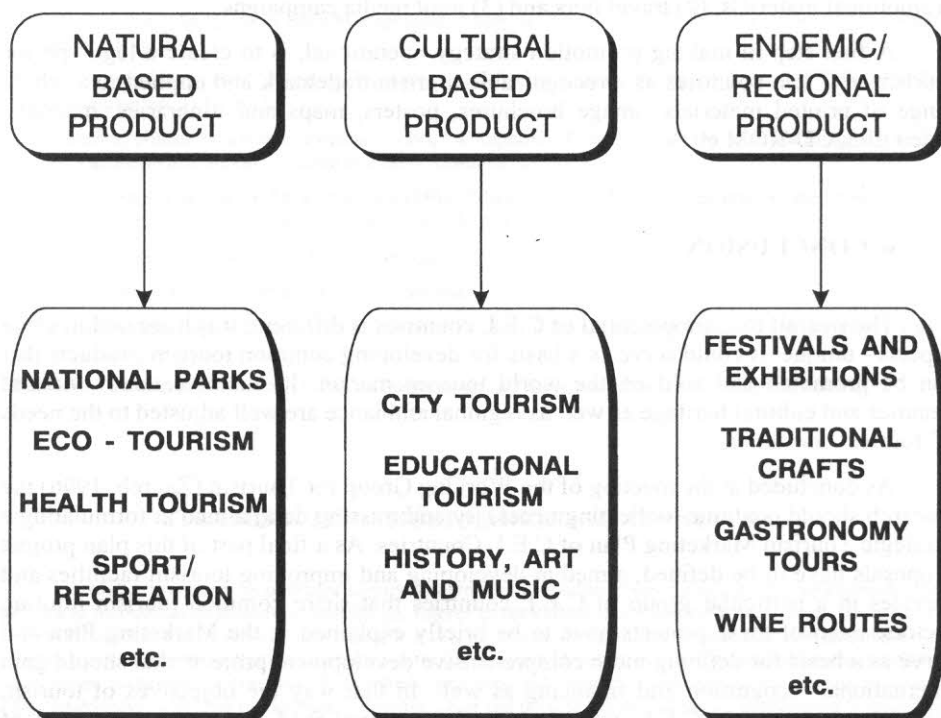
Conceptualization of Tourism Products

Two basic approaches in formulating tourism product policy of the countries of C.E.I. could be applied:

1) Some types of tourism like vacational (sun and sea) are not suitable for developing common tourism products/themes because tourists tend to make selection and stay for that type of vacation only in one country. Therefore, these types of tourism can not be used for deriving common tourism products of the C.E.I. countries. C.E.I. countries can still, however, promote such tourism together with other types using the same promotional medium (e.g. image brochure of summer vacation possibilities in Central Europe, etc.).

2) The most attractive localities can be used for developing common C.E.I. tourism products (in organizational form of tours and routes) and in that way connect different countries.

Figure 8. Clusters of tourism products of the CEI countries



Based on tourism resources and tourists' preferences three clusters of products were developed: (1) natural based product, (2) cultural based product and (3) endemic/regional product. For example, cultural based product has been recognized by most of the C.E.I. member countries as most suitable for developing common tourism themes like **city tourism** ("Metropolis of Central Europe", "Small cities of Central Europe"), **educational tourism** ("Student competitions on tourism/ecology in Central Europe", "Workshops for young painters, sculptors and musicians") and **history, art and music** ("UNESCO Cultural heritage sights", "The castles and fortresses of Central Europe", "Roman Empire in Central Europe", "Dynasties of Central Europe", "The art treasures of Central Europe", "Medieval art of Central Europe", "Opera houses and famous musicians" etc.).

Target Markets and Promotion Guidelines

Following market orientation of the majority of the C.E.I. countries, suggested geographic target markets for the common tourism products of C.E.I. countries are

European countries, the C.E.I. countries and overseas destinations - America and Asia. Main promotion target segments are identified as consumers, associations and intermediaries (tourism agencies and touroperators).

According to the promotion experiences of other associations (e.g. European Travel Commission) the main promotional activities could include: (1) distribution of promotional materials, (2) travel fairs and (3) joint media campaigns.

A first step in making promotion strategy operational, is to create a logotype for tourism of C.E.I. countries as a recognizable tourism trademark and applied to a whole range of printed materials (image brochures, posters, maps and itineraries, manuals, video film, CD-ROM etc.).

6. CONCLUSION

The overall tourism potential of C.E.I. countries is different; it is huge and in some aspects - unique. It could serve as a basis for developing common tourism products that can be promoted and sold on the world tourism market. Its main features - natural beauties and cultural heritage as well as regional ambiance are well adjusted to the needs of tourism consumers.

As concluded at the meeting of the Working Group for Tourism (Zagreb, 1996) the research should continue (collecting necessary and missing data) aimed at formulating a Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan of C.E.I. Countries. As a final part of this plan project proposals have to be defined, aimed at developing and improving tourism facilities and services in a particular group of C.E.I. countries that share common tourism limiting factors. Each of these projects have to be briefly explained in the Marketing Plan and serve as a basis for defining more comprehensive development projects that should gain international recognition and financing as well. In that way the objectives of tourism marketing strategy of C.E.I. countries can be accomplished and mutual interests of C.E.I. member countries in the field of tourism fulfilled.

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Sažetak

STRATEŠKI TURISTIČKI MARKETING ZEMALJA S.E.I.

Političke promjene na području Europe krajem 80-tih rezultirale su osnivanjem Srednjoeuropske Inicijative kao međudržavne regionalne asocijacije. Interes za suradnjom u turizmu može se objasniti činjenicom da većina srednjoeuropskih zemalja ima značajne kulturne, povijesne i prirodne resurse koje nije iskoristila u dovoljnoj mjeri. Djelatna skupina za turizam kojom predsjedava Hrvatska od 1993 godine, donijela je odluku o provođenju istraživanja s glavnim ciljem određivanja osnovnih turističkih pokazatelja kao temelja za formuliranje zajedničke strategije marketinga u turizmu. Ovaj rad predstavlja metodologiju istraživanja te iznosi njegove glavne rezultate.

Ključne riječi: strateški marketing, turistički marketing, destinacijski marketing, turistički strateški marketing plan, Srednja Europa, Srednjoeuropska Inicijativa.