

**Daniela Gračan**

E-mail: danielag@fthm.hr

University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management Opatija,  
Primorska 42, 51410 Opatija, Croatia

**Maja Coner**

E-mail: coner.maja@gmail.com

**Danimir Štros**

E-mail: danimir@brdovec.hr

Municipality of Brdovec, Trg dr. Franje Tuđmana 1, 10291 Prigorje Brdovečko

---

## **Possibilities of Connecting Maritime and Continental Tourism with an Emphasis on Sustainable Development**

### **Abstract**

Contemporary tourism trends are marked by a number of elements that enrich the product of the tourism and travel industry and contribute to the satisfaction of visitors, while respecting the principles of sustainable tourist destination management. This paper analyzes the possibilities for the implementation of charter flights and the introduction of electric cars with the aim of connecting maritime and continental tourism in Croatia on the principles of sustainable development of tourist destinations. For the purpose of proving the set hypotheses, research has been carried out involving all the county tourist offices as the target points of the survey, as each of them covers a range of local self-government units, and can be considered a representative sample of tourism in the entire territory of Croatia. The survey was conducted through questionnaires with the office directors. The analysis of their responses suggests the need to approach and merge maritime and continental tourism through a new tourist product by introducing charter flights and electric cars. Based on the results of the research and in the opinion of the respondents, the introduction of charter flights would lead to the extension of the tourist season, the expansion of the tourist offer and thus the greater pleasure of visitors themselves, increase of employment, increase of local government revenues and synergy effect of economic development. Respondents believe that the introduction of alternative electric vehicles would significantly contribute to environmental protection and rationalization of operations due to considerably lower costs (gas emissions into the environment, the possibility of co-financing through EU funds or central and local government funds, maintenance costs, etc.). The introduction of charter flights and the usage of electric cars from the airport to the destination would significantly contribute to the achievement of better tourism-related results and the increase of the competitiveness of Croatian tourism as a whole.

**Key words:** charter flights, electric cars, continental and maritime tourism, sustainable development, seasonality, competitiveness

## 1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to explore the possibilities of connecting maritime and continental tourism through charter flights. The purpose of the article is to explore ways in which to extend the tourist season and complete the tourist offer throughout the territory of the Republic of Croatia. For this purpose, it is inevitable to find new opportunities and tourism facilities in view of the increasingly demanding needs of visitors who come to their destination with their preferences and expectations, eager to experience the indigenous spirit, cultural sights, authentic gastronomic delights, recreation, events and even active participation in various local farm jobs approaching the life of the domiciled population.

The key limiting factor for the development of Croatian tourism is certainly the seasonal nature of the overall tourism activity. To this end, significant efforts of tourism workers are invested through a number of programs and measures that directly affect the extension of the tourist season. One of the ways is to introduce a charter flight to connect the coastline with the continental part of the country. Counties that are situated far from the sea coast should organize runways for tourists to visit a larger number of tourist destinations. This is the comparative advantage of the Republic of Croatia with respect to the natural preservation and variety of natural and cultural contents of each region.

The role of the tourist boards is to merge the tourism offer of the maritime and continental Croatia through a unified package of arrangements to be presented at all European and world tourism fairs. The paper proposes solutions for quick and efficient panoramic charter flights, as well as staying in regions that are attractive to visitors but very often remote and therefore unavailable. Charter air carriers are classical airlines that are committed to carrying aviation airline charter. The main difference is that regular carriers have pre-defined conditions for departure and arrival and in-flight services, whereas charter is a periodic air transport with pre-arranged conditions. Charter companies do not sell their tickets through standard reservation systems, but exclusively through sales networks of travel agencies and tour operators, and for the purposes of this article it is emphasized that the package arrangement also includes charter transport to specific destinations and backwards. Prices of charter flights are generally lower due to the fact that they are sold through a package of arrangements, meaning that airline companies participating in the charter have a safe occupancy. The intention is to achieve fast and meaningful transport of tourists to tourist destinations when taking charter flights, but also to avoid the bus and other carriers that significantly influence the creation of crowds and the pollution of tourist destinations.

One should also bear in mind the economic viability of individual destinations in such a way that, before determining the package of arrangements, it is possible to consider facts that may adversely affect the normal work and life of the domiciled population in tourist destinations. It is necessary to consider how many visitors a destination can accept, without jeopardizing the system of drinking water and drainage,

adequate disposal of municipal and other waste and so on, that is to carry out an analysis of all factors that might negatively affect the sustainability of the tourist destination.

## **2. Maritime and continental tourism of the Republic of Croatia**

The Republic of Croatia, as a tourism-oriented country with a long-standing tourism tradition, is a significant partner to the European Union and its members. Tourism, being a complex economic system that makes a set of specific complementary activities, is extremely important for the development of the national economy of Croatia. That is also confirmed by data suggesting that Croatia is more dependent on tourism than any other member of the European Union. Following the accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union, there are more possibilities for further development and strengthening of Croatian tourism, in line with the growth of tourist traffic [6]. In Croatia, tourism has traditionally developed in the coastal zone, which comprises seven counties along the Adriatic out of 21 county in total, and although they occupy less than one half of the total territory (45%), they compromise 98% of the total tourist overnight stays. In coastal counties, the “sun-and-sea” bathing-holiday tourism is mainly focused on the summer tourism season. In the continental part of Croatia, only about 2% of total tourist traffic is realized in the remaining 13 counties and the City of Zagreb [1].

The development of Adriatic tourism has not been followed by the development of tourism in continental parts of Croatia with the same intensity. There is also a noteworthy lack of adequate functional and program-related links between maritime and continental tourism, although there have been attempts in that direction. There is no reason why an adequate development of tourism cannot be established in all areas of interest to domestic and foreign visitors. This would contribute not only to the overall development of tourism-related and economic activity, but also to the economic development of Croatia as a whole [11].

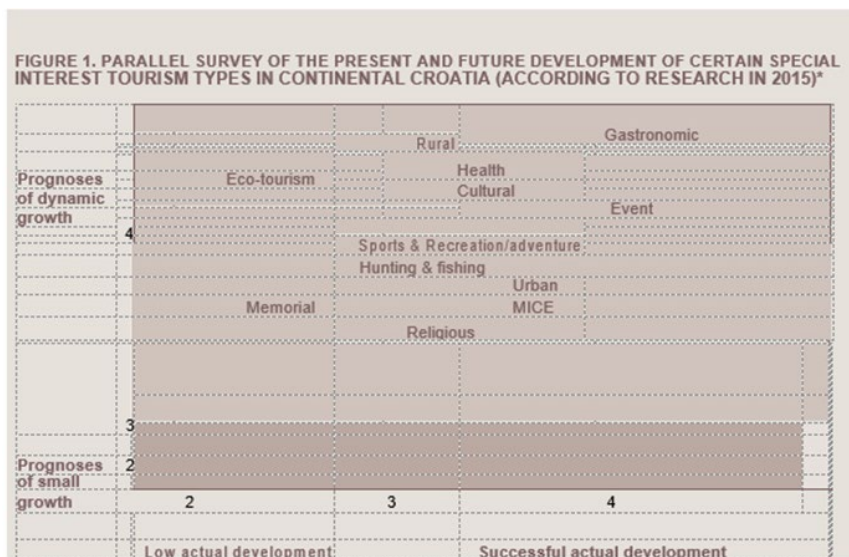
The solution can be offered in the form of greater engagement of counties that are far from the sea. In their area, they should arrange runways for charter aircrafts. In this way, visitors will be offered the opportunity to visit more distant destinations while in Croatia. When it comes to natural preservation, it should be emphasized that electric cars should be introduced by business entities and all those organizations offering tourism products.

According to forecasts by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the number of tourists in Europe will double in the next 20 years, and such a steady growth is contributed by several factors, including the rise in the number of low-fare airlines, increased use of the Internet and the expansion of the European Union which opens new tourism markets. A WTO research also shows that visitors have been increasingly turning to discovering different forms of tourism. They often seek the authentic experience based on local culture and tradition, which is a more friendly and personalized service

in keeping with the natural environment. Croatia has an ideal position to exploit new opportunities in the development of tourism. For many future visitors, it is a relatively 'new' destination with diverse flora and fauna as well as an active cultural tradition. From the lush green flood plains of Slavonia to the mountain peaks of Velebit, from the idyllic rural landscape of Istria to the dramatic Dalmatian coast and fragrant islands scattered on the peaceful Adriatic [7].

A well-conceived and properly realized development of tourism would contribute to the enhancement of the Croatian tourism product and would attract more foreign visitors, and thus influence the extension of their stay, increased daily consumption and the extension of the tourism season. It is clear that all this includes further qualitative development of accommodation capacities, as well as large and small material and spiritual infrastructure and social environment, including appropriate economic policy, legal security, protection and the like [11].

Bartoluci, Kesar and Hendija have analyzed the current level of development of the offered 12 types and forms of tourism in the continental Croatia. The overall average development of specific forms of tourism has received a low average rating - 2.7. Manifestation tourism (3.2) was rated best, followed by gastronomic and enology (3.0) and cultural (2.9) and ecotourism (2.8) [2]. The average rating of all specific forms of tourism in the same authors' survey in 2015 was 2.9 - which is slightly higher than in the preceding year, which indicates the growing trend in the improvement of tourism offer in rural Croatia. Almost all the specific types of tourism have received better rating, which make it possible to conclude that a more dynamic development is emerging in the continental Croatia as a result of new tourism development strategies and various incentive measures. Figure 1 shows the perspective of the development of certain types and specific forms of tourism in relation to their current level of development.



*Figure 1 - Perspective of the development of certain types and specific forms of tourism in relation to their current level of development in continental Croatia*  
Source: [2]

When referring to Croatia as a tourist brand, one can primarily refer to one of the most desirable destinations in the European framework, while its better positioning on a global tourism market requires much greater efforts [8].

### **3. Impact of the tourism in the Republic of Croatia upon sustainable development**

The greatest pressures of tourism upon the environment are mainly due to the concentration of tourism in a relatively limited space and time. With the “unavoidable” pressure on space (in the most attractive locations during the development away from the local population), the environment is also significantly jeopardized by individual tourist activities, excessive visits to sensitive areas (protected natural areas - national parks and nature parks), countryside driving, construction of golf courses and others [4].

It should be emphasized that the basic problem people are facing today is to harmonize the development and at the same time not give up the benefits it brings, while preserving the nature and quality of the environment which is seriously threatened by the former [9]. It should be pointed out that the rural area is increasingly affirmed as a place of autonomous and recognizable tourism offer. Even the “reformed” mass visitors are increasingly seeking to enrich the maritime offer of attractions in coastal and hinterland (inland) areas. Without comprehensive knowledge of the entire tourist

attraction base, the coast and the hinterland, it is no longer possible to create a tourism product that is demanded by the new tourism market [5]. Even the tourism region can be considered a new ecological system that experiences a lot of changes, but it should remain balanced. The tourism region is manifested as a system dependent on the demand, supply, external factors, water, sources of pollution, etc. A permanent development of the tourism region is based on historical events, cultural heritage as well as the type of use, type of construction, location etc. The complex of these interdependencies in the functioning of the tourism region can be distinguished by landscape and space “consumers”. This dependency is a non-linear structure, but it can be simplified: the more tourists, the greater the burden on the total space and the greater “consumption” of the landscape [3]. One of the problems of intense tourism development is waste disposal and other types of pollution carried by the seasonal concentration of a large number of people in a restricted area, as well as increased interest in the construction of residential facilities in the most attractive locations, which significantly degrades the spatial quality of these areas. By these actions, coastal towns are transformed into large bedrooms, a carefully designed space for hundreds of years is being degraded, and the chaos in urbanism leads to the construction of illegal facilities even in the best preserved natural reserves. Tourism brings about increased traffic, and thus many negative environmental implications [10]. The solution is offered through the creation of new tourism products through the synergy and tourism valorization of the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia, which would extend the tourism season, contribute to the protection of the environment, as well as to the reduction of costs, which would inevitably enable greater competitiveness of Croatia on the European and global tourism market.

#### **4. Results of the empirical research**

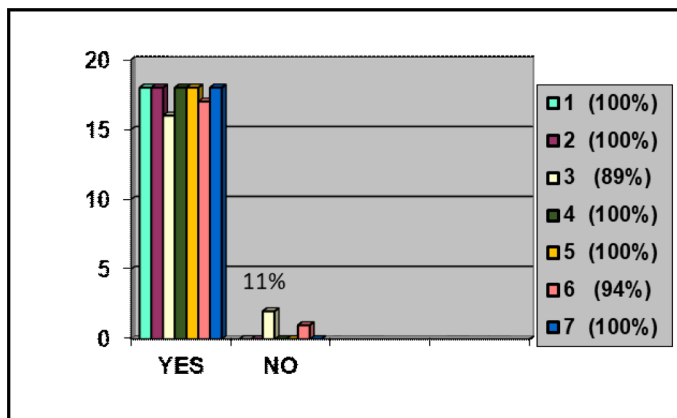
For the purpose of this paper, a survey has been carried out at all county tourist offices in Croatia (21 offices) and the questions were answered by the directors of 18 tourist offices. The table below shows the respondents’ opinion in respect of the following statements:

*Table 1 - Results of the research*

CLAIM	YES (%)	NO (%)
1. You support the idea of linking maritime and continental tourism by charter flights	100%	-
2. Connecting maritime and continental tourism would lead to the development of continental regions	100%	-
3. By linking maritime and continental tourism, tourism season would be extended	89%	11%
4. You support the idea of introducing electric cars in tourist destinations	100%	-
5. The central state and regional self-government should provide the infrastructure for handling charter flights	100%	-
6. The state needs to finance or co-finance the procurement of electric cars	94%	6%
7. You support the idea of offering a single arrangement of connected maritime and continental tourism	100%	-

*Source: author's calculation*

The results of the research are shown in the chart below.

*Figure 2 - Results of the research*

*Source: author's calculations*

Based on the research carried out, it can be concluded that all county tourist office directors would support the idea of linking maritime and continental tourism by charter flights and they believe that linking maritime and continental tourist destinations by charter flights would lead to the development of continental regions. The total of 87% of the respondents answered affirmatively that a combination of maritime and continental tourism would extend the tourism season. All respondents also consider the idea of

introducing electric cars in tourist destinations necessary. They also believe that the central state and regional self-government should provide the infrastructure for charter flights and 94% of them maintain that the central state should finance or co-finance the procurement of electric cars. All respondents would support the idea of offering a single arrangement of related maritime and continental tourism.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that linking maritime and continental tourism as a new tourism product would improve the tourist offer on the territory of Croatia. The creation of this tourist product by charter flights would produce synergies with a positive effect on the development of the entire region, the tourism season would be extended, the environmental protection would benefit, and cost reductions would inevitably lead to greater competitiveness of Croatia on the European and world tourism market.

Furthermore, this linkage needs to be considered within a wider social and economic context. As a result of the completion of maritime and continental arrangements throughout the year, there would be an increase in the number of employees, increased placement of food and other products and services of domestic providers and ultimately a higher inflow of taxes and contributions to local and state budget. The Republic of Croatia has a high share of 18% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in tourism and it should be borne in mind that the tourist countries from the region represent a serious competition, so that a reduction in this share in GDP is to be expected if innovative solutions are not implemented that would contribute to the growth and development of tourism. As a result of modern trends and developments in the emission of greenhouse gases into the environment, it is urgently necessary for important steps to be taken to improve it. The results of the research conducted for the purpose of this article show that respondents place an emphasis on environmental protection and support the introduction of alternative transport solutions, primarily electric cars. Connecting maritime and continental tourism is a key link to the economic development of Croatia. Consequently, it is recommended that the central and local authorities adopt tourism development strategies in the direction of linking and of joint presentation on the market in order to achieve better competitiveness and greater visibility, which will result in effective economic growth and employment of domestic labor directly or indirectly in the travel and tourism industry throughout the year. In addition, the central government in co-operation with local authorities should provide draft planning documents and realize the investment projects related to the necessary infrastructure (legal regulations, airstrip planning, procurement of electric cars, incentives for employment in tourism-related activities etc.). In conclusion, it would be possible to achieve a synergistic effect by linking maritime and continental tourism, which would significantly contribute to the development and growth in the travel and tourism branch and in the economy as a whole.



## References

1. Bartoluci, M, Hendija, Z, Petračić, M. (2015) Possibilities of sustainable rural tourism development in continental Croatia. *Acta Turistica*. 27(2), 191-219.
2. Bartoluci, M, Hendija, Z, Petračić, M (2016) Prerequisites for sustainable development of rural tourism in continental Croatia. *Acta Economica Et Turistica*. 1(2).
3. Jurković, S. (1995) Possibilities of Control and Restrictions of "Consuming" Landscape Caused by Tourist Use. *Space*. 3 (2).
4. Kružić, N (2004) Tourism and the Environment. *Tourism and Hospitality Management*. 10 (2).
5. Kušen, E. (2001). Tourism and Space - Classification of Tourist Attractions. *Space*. 9 (1).
6. Marić, K, Samardžić, B, Protrka, N. (2017) Analysis of Tourism Indicators and Security in Tourism of the Republic of Croatia and Opportunities to Boost Competitiveness of Croatian Tourism After Entering the European Union - E4E Education. 7 (1).
7. Miljak, T, Bačić, L, Kitić, M. (2012) Ecotourism as an Incentive of Entrepreneurship Development in Tourism on the Example of the Republic of Croatia. *Learning for Entrepreneurship*. 2 (2).
8. Skoko, B, Gluvačević, D. (2016) States as Tourism Brands: Creation, Management and Valuation. *Media Studies*. 7 (13).
9. Span, Ž. (1997) Tourism and the Protection of Nature and the Environment. *Social Ecology*. 6 (1-2).
10. Tepšić, Ž. (2008) Eco-destination of the Mediterranean: from theory to practice. *Acta turistica*. 2(2).
11. Vizjak, A. (1995) Adriatic and continental tourism in the tourist offer of the Republic of Croatia. *Tourism and hospitality management*. 1(1).

