

## SOME ELEMENTS FOR POSITION DETERMINATION OF TOURISM DESTINATION IN OSIJEK – BARANJA COUNTY

### NEKI ELEMENTI ZA ODREĐIVANJE TURISTIČKIH ODREDIŠTA U OSIJEČKO-BARANJSKOJ ŽUPANIJI

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**Abstract:** *This work deals with the influence of the socio – cultural factors in tourist decisions upon the choice of tourist destinations. The author`s attention is primarily directed towards the analysis of social background consisting of „uncontrolled marketing variables“ which are essential in the segmentation of the tourist product of destination. The core positioning strategy is combined with the close related strategies of segmenting and targeting. These strategies defines the differential advantage that is to be communicated to the target customers. Therefore, positioning encompasses: defining of the market competition structure, selecting the right competitive advantages, communicating and delivering the chosen position.*

**Key words:** *positioning, tourism, destination, Osijek-baranja county*

**Sažetak:** *Ovaj rad obrađuje utjecaj sociokulturnih čimbenika na turiste pri izboru turističkih odredišta. Namjera autora je prvenstveno usmjerena ka analizi društvene pozadine koja se sastoji od „nekontroliranih marketinških varijabli“ koje su bitne pri izboru turističkog odredišta. Osnovna strategija pozicioniranja kombinirana je s usko povezanim strategijama segmentiranja i ciljanja. Te strategije određuju razlikovne prednosti koje se mogu primijeniti na ciljanog gosta. Stoga pozicioniranje obuhvaća: definiranje strukture tržišnog natjecanja, izbor pravih konkurentskih prednosti i komuniciranje izabranih pozicija.*

**Ključne riječi:** *pozicioniranje, turizam, odredište, Osječko-baranjska županija*



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## **1. Introductory considerations**

Tourism is nowadays a very dynamic, complex and stochastic social process. As a social process, it denotes a relationship of an individual towards time and space around him. That very specific relationship towards time and space puts an individual into a new relationship towards values that surround and determine him. According to one of its definitions, tourism is both a social phenomenon and a social relationship, i.e., “a set of relationships and phenomena resulting from travelling and stay of visitors at a place unless that stay is a beginning of a permanent stay or is associated with a business activity.”(Dulčić & Petrić, 2001).

One of the priority goals aimed at the growth and development of the Republic of Croatia is to develop and increase the competitiveness of Croatian tourism. Challenges that Croatian tourist establishments are facing nowadays follow world tourism trends: globalization, introduction of IC technologies (Websites instead of tourist information centres, e-commerce, new distribution networking, faster booking systems etc.), ecotourism, connecting of tourist operators and large hotel chains, one-to-one marketing (direct marketing with clients), database management and further evolution of tourist market. In 2007, this branch of economy received the largest investments and development funds such as incentives for construction of high class accommodation facilities, small and family hotels, as well as subsidized lending rates for construction of accommodation facilities. Through the mentioned development projects, incentive funds are allocated to encourage the development of selective tourism forms such as rural tourism, health tourism, cultural tourism, theme tourism, ecotourism, religious tourism and other forms of selective tourism. This recognizes, motivates and creates future tourism development possibilities and the power to impact the overall economy of the Republic of Croatia.

## **2. The Impact of Globalization on Structural changes in tourism**

Globalization is becoming the crossroad of modern-epoch civilization. Global changes along with inevitable process of internationalization cause also the continuous change of practical aspects of structural changes. Nowadays, globalization seeks from tourism not only differentiation between quality individual trips and mass tourism but also the acknowledgement of individualism. Division of tourists according to their social and demographic characteristics also has a practical importance in the research of tourism as a branch of economy.

One of very frequent determinants that influence the choice of travel destinations is nowadays also the change in age structure of population motivated to travel. Older age groups are much more represented – senior market. Demographic indicators warn that every seventh inhabitant of the United States or Japan is more than 63 years old, and in the European Union, every fourth inhabitant is more than 55 years old. That very generation significantly influenced the changes in tourist offer towards the end of the last century (stable financial situation, distant tourist destinations) and started the rising tide of mass tourism.

Family groups are the most frequent group form in tourism. Research has shown that children play an important role (often they exert crucial influence) in their family when it comes to the choice of tourist destination. They do decide directly, but they are very fastidious consumers of tourism services. On the one hand, their behaviour during vacation has a significant impact on their parents' satisfaction and on the other - the future is theirs. Earlier experiences and impressions about a particular destination will have an important impact on their future decisions regarding the destination of their vacation once they become adults and make their own decisions.

The impact of globalization on structural changes in tourism reflects also in the dynamic development of new needs such as sustainable development. Sustainable development comprises three principles: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and socio-cultural sustainability.

Environmental sustainability means compatibility of development with preservation and sustainability of fundamental environmental processes, biological resources as well as the diversity of flora and fauna. Economic sustainability generates an economically efficient system and raises the quality of life for the present and future generations. Socio-cultural sustainability guarantees compatibility of sustainable development with preservation of culture and cultural heritage as well as the value system affected by the development causing preservation of community identity (primarily local communities).

In view of the structure of sustainable development, it is necessary to raise the level of planning and management in tourism as a tertiary sector of industry. Both planning and management need to be directed towards efficient use of resources in tourism.

### **3. The Challenges for Tourism Development in Continental Croatia**

The main strategic goals of tourism in continental Croatia are competitiveness of Croatian tourism on the international market, balanced regional development, self-employment, motivation of young people to remain in rural areas; permanent protection, implementation and adherence to high environmental standards; long-term sustainable evaluation of tourism potential; development of integrated tourism destinations; improvement of quality of accommodation facilities and tourist services, incentives for organic food production as well as production of indigenous products and their sale through tourism; education of tourism workers, and increase of the share of continental tourism in total tourism earnings.\* In order to achieve the strategic goals set for Croatian tourism as soon as possible, ongoing incentives and state-aided programs (incentives for raising the competitiveness of tourism market; incentive programs for promotion, protection, renovation and inclusion of cultural and natural heritage into tourism offer in areas with less developed tourism) and new programs (incentives for the development of theme trips, incentives for production of indigenous Croatian souvenirs; farm loan programs; co-financing of tourism projects which were allocated international grants).

Incentive programs to encourage the development of continental tourism are a great opportunity for revitalization of rural areas, improvement of economic development

and promotion of the Republic of Croatia as an integral tourist destination. Regions and cities/towns with developed tourism should provide more assistance in terms of human resources and funding in cooperation with the private sector and by doing so support the incentives and programs of the Ministry, i.e., the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

#### **4. Special forms of Continental tourism**

Osijek-Baranja County is a geographical and historical region in Eastern Slavonia. It lies between the Drava in the north (border with Hungary), the Sava in the south (border with Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Danube in the east (border with Serbia). Rural areas account for 92% of the territory of the Republic of Croatia and according to statistical data, some 40% of the total population live there.

In 2006, continental counties (without the City of Zagreb) accounted for 5.2 % of tourist visits and 2% of overnight stays in the total Croatian tourist trade.

Positive atmosphere motivates population to become involved in tourism. Special forms of continental tourism have developed: cyclotourism, health tourism, wellness, business tourism, religious tourism, wine trails, hunting tourism, recreational fishing, and hiking.

Over the recent years, Croatia has become a destination of choice for *cyclotourists* from all over the world. A pleasant bicycle ride through Osijek-Baranja County satisfies even the most demanding of cyclotourists. This route is a part of the international EuroVelo Route 6. The Danube cyclotourist route (project started in 2004) has international signs; there are information desks, internet kiosks, Bike&Bed accommodation, visitor centre, and it is promoted at fairs. In 2007, this route was used by over 2000 cyclotourists from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Switzerland. There are national plans to connect central and eastern Croatia and brand the region surrounded by rivers as a cyclotourism destination.

*Wellness* is becoming one of the most important tourist products all over the world and in Croatia. It includes cosmetic and spa treatments, massages, sauna, aromatherapy, fitness, Pilates, medical services (chiropractics, hydro-massage). Wellness tourism has grown considerably since 2006. Out of 65 wellness centres, 11% are located in continental Croatia while 23% are in the City of Zagreb. The potential of Bizovac Spa to offer wellness services is not fully exploited.

In 2006, Croatia was named “Top adventure – must see” destination in the world by the reputable magazine *National Geographic*. The new Tourism Services Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Croatia, issue 68/07) prescribes mandatory trainings for instructors, teachers, and trainers in that specific form of continental tourism. The interest for adventure tourism in Slavonia is on the rise.

Hunting tourism as a special form of tourism is a tradition in Osijek-Baranja County. Approximately 52,000 Croatian citizens are hunters, while 4,500 hunting permits were issued to foreign citizens in 2007.

“Wine trails” is the name for a special form of trading in agricultural produce of a wine growing area in which rural farms joined under the same name offer their

products, predominantly wine but also other specialties, accompanied by adequate hospitality services. What makes wine trails special is the beauty of the region (Baranja vineyards, Đakovo vineyards), its tradition and natural and cultural sights.

## 5. Conclusion

Conditions and possibilities for the development of tourism in continental Croatia are truly endless. They are marked by very rich cultural heritage, natural attractions and increasingly good road connections (road, rail, river and air transport) between destinations. Considering the conditions for the development of continental forms of tourism in Osijek-Baranja County, providing that funds are invested and existing resources are continually used, a high-quality and swift development of continental tourism is expected as well as better results in overall accommodation capacity utilization. The development of continental tourism will enrich the tourist offer which still seriously lags behind the newly emergent tourist demand. In addition to that, a series of social and economic activities would be initiated.

Life in Osijek-Baranja County would revitalize and this would open up new employment possibilities for local population. A higher quality of life and life standard would be created and the population would remain in this area and improve its demographics. The goal of the development of continental tourism in Osijek-Baranja County is to meet the needs and improve the quality of life of local population, develop high quality tourist product, satisfy the needs and requirements of tourists, and preserve resources for future generations.

Tourism improves infrastructure, promotes creation of an adequate tourist supra-structure (can be used by local population as well; enables the development of entrepreneurship and crafts - indigenous souvenirs, services, healthy foods; promotes employment; preserves and protects environment and cultural heritage; promotes reconstruction and revitalization of historical buildings which brings economic benefits and reinforces cultural identity; provides environmental monitoring and continuous control; requires application of modern information & communication technologies; and brings a series of new direct and indirect benefits.

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