

# COMPETITIVENESS OF VOJVODINA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION: THE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TRAVEL & TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS INDEX INDICATORS

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## Abstract:

In 2015 and 2016, research was done on the territory of Vojvodina on the attitudes of professionals employed in the tourism industry of Vojvodina, for the purpose of preparing a doctoral dissertation in order to show whether and to what extent Vojvodina represents a competitive tourism destination.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of the research on the evaluation of individual indicators of competitiveness index: in the field of regulatory framework, business environment, infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources of Vojvodina, with the aim to emphasize the strengths and weaknesses of the destination and find optimal solutions for future tourism development of this area. The main hypothesis proposed in the study estimates that the amount of certain segments of the competitiveness index varies depending on the sector to which an employee belongs, and is not related to demographic variables such as gender, education, work experience and age of the respondents. The research results obtained by comparing two groups of independent samples on the basis of Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis test, within the public and the private sector in the tourism industry of Vojvodina, have shown that there is a statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index of Vojvodina as a tourism destination in relation to the sector to which the employed experts belong, but not in relation to the examined demographic variables.

Research has shown that Vojvodina's average rating as a tourism destination is 4.11. The average rating of the state sector is 4.24 and 3.98 of the private sector, as two sectors with the lowest grade estimate tourism infrastructure. This leads to one of the main conclusions that it is quite hard to reach destination competitiveness without infrastructure.

## Keywords:

competitiveness index, Vojvodina, tourism, tourism industry, employees, socio-demographic characteristics.

## INTRODUCTION

Competitiveness has become the central preoccupation of both developed and developing countries in an increasingly open and integrated world economy (Porter, 2004).

There is hardly any tourism destination in the world whose attractiveness does not appeal to tourists and directs the demand for travel, at local, regional, national and international level. This is one of the reasons why the competition between them is all more explicit, with the aim to create a competitive advantage by the quality offer compared to similar destinations in the region. Tourism is frequently viewed as an important

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engine of economic growth and development of countries contributing to increasing the economic welfare of local populations (Webster & Ivanov, 2014).

The overall competitiveness of the tourism industry is vital for the survival and growth of the international market, in terms of the increase in leisure time and funds (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

Increasing the bulk of free time and funds have brought about great changes that eventually affected the formation of the tourism offer, distribution of tourist arrivals during the year, as well as the impact on the demand for better quality services.

Today, every company is operating in a competitive environment, both internally and externally. In such circumstances, tourism, as part of the tertiary sector, can have beneficial effects on the increase of GDP of the country, as well as positive effects on the social, cultural and environmental level destination (Cirstea, 2014).

The goal of every tourism destination is to create an attractive product and to meet the needs of tourists at the destination, so that it could offer the value for money. The tourist satisfaction is often considered the most important tool for increasing the competitiveness of tourism destinations in the period of globalization.

Modern tourists are more experienced and demanding, and the tourism market with its dynamics contributes to interchangeability and reconciliation of the supply and demand (Gračan & Lugarić, 2013).

Tourism destinations combine a set of products and services, offered individually or together at a particular location, and place this product for offer in the global marketplace (Bajs, 2015, p. 123).

The concept of “tourism destination” is a complex one, all tourism destinations actually being amalgams of products, services, and experiences, with many different stakeholders involved (Iunius *et al.*, 2015).

Achieving a competitive advantage is directly linked with the satisfied tourists, for whom a large number of existing and new destinations compete, in order to dominate the tourism market (Pavlic *et al.*, 2011). The issue of tourism destination competitiveness is based on the experience of tourists at the destination, as an essential tourism product (Popescu, 2011).

Tourism destination competitiveness was defined in the tourism literature as “its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capi-

tal of the destination for future generation” (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 2).

Tourism destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers (Buhalis, 2000).

Long-term development of tourism at the destination refers to the establishment of a continuous process of measuring the destination competitiveness, based on the continuous monitoring of competitiveness indicators (Popescu & Pavlović, 2015).

In the 2015 report, the experts from the World Economic Forum stated that the aim of the Competitiveness Index is to provide a comprehensive strategic tool for measuring the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the travel & tourism sector, which in turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country (Crotti & Misrahi, 2015).

The competitiveness of the tourism sector includes numerous factors such as the natural environment (geography, climate, landscape), living environment, fun and entertainment *etc.* (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009).

Based on the Competitiveness Index World Economic Forum in Serbia, in the period from 2007 to the present, Serbia as a tourism destination was low rated, not only compared to the leading tourism country, but also in relation to the neighboring countries.

Serbia does not have a recognizable image as a tourism destination, apart from Belgrade, Kopaonik and few other destinations, since it offers internationally recognized product (Čerović *et al.*, 2015, p. 7).

Research on the assessment of the individual elements of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination is conducted among employees in the tourism industry of Vojvodina.

Despite different assessments of certain elements of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination, respondents in both sectors assigned the lowest grade to tourism infrastructure of Vojvodina and clearly pointed to the big problem of this destination.

In 2015, based on the estimates of the World Economic Forum Competitiveness index for Serbia, it is concluded that the natural and cultural resources of the place, along with the infrastructure get the lowest mark.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of the research based on the survey data of employees in the tourism industry of Vojvodina, to compare the assessment of competitiveness of tourism destinations by both sectors, and to highlight the advantages and disadvantages that are important for future development of tourism in this area, achieving competitiveness of Vojvodina in relation to the similar destinations in the region.



The assessment of competitiveness of certain parts of Vojvodina as a destination can be a guideline for development of future strategy on tourism development, in terms of precisely defined type of tourism that can be developed in the future.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research included two groups: employees in the private and public sectors of the tourism industry of Vojvodina who participate in the promotion of Vojvodina as a tourism destination at the micro and macro levels, participate in writing the strategy for tourism development, impact the quality of services at the destination, and tourist satisfaction.

The main hypothesis of the study estimates that the amount of certain segments of the competitiveness index varies depending on the sector to which the employee belongs, and is not related to demographic variables such as gender, education, work experience and age of the respondents.

The work consists of two parts. The first part deals with the assessment of the competitiveness index of Serbia as a tourism destination by the World Economic Forum. The second part includes research on the assessment of certain parts of the index of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination, the comparison of the amount of the assessment of competitiveness of experts employed in two sectors and the influence of demographic characteristics in the destination competitiveness assessment.

The data in the paper were collected by direct research.

The questionnaire was sent to 250 addresses of tourism entities in Vojvodina. In the questionnaire, 204 respondents expressed their opinion on the given matter in various forms: live, by phone or via email. Of the total respondents, 102 (50%) belong to the companies in the private sector and the same number of respondents (102) goes to public sector enterprises.

The research was carried out partially, during the period from May 2015 to May 2016 and was conducted by interviewing employees in tourism companies of Vojvodina that belong to the public (employed in the tourism organizations, CEO's, managers, clerks, managers of resorts, city governments-sector for tourism, tour guides employed in some of the sectors) and the private sector (CEO's, managers, clerks in hotels, motels, boarding houses, hostels, travel agencies and independent travel guides).

The average age of employed respondents was 39.8 years. Out of the total number of respondents, 105 were

males (51.5%) and 99 females (48.5%). In terms of education, the majority of respondents have a university degree, *i.e.*, 92 of them (45.1%), 61 of them (29.9%) finished higher school, while 40 of them (19.6%) have a secondary school degree. The smallest number of respondents has completed master's studies, *i.e.*, 11 of them (6.4%). The average work experience of respondents is 10.6 years.

The research process was implemented in three phases: data collection, sorting, grouping of data and statistical analysis using statistical software SPSS, version 17.0.0.

The data were analyzed using the method of descriptive and then inferential statistics.

Descriptive methods were used to describe the surveyed population: distribution of frequency (nominal and percentage), mean values, median, standard deviation, rank, minimum and maximum values.

Statistical techniques for comparison of two groups of independent samples, *i.e.* non-parametric techniques: Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis test were used to compare the attitudes of professionals employed in the tourism companies of Vojvodina, whereas the comparison of statistical data was done by the comparative method.

By applying the appropriate research methods (Mann-Whitney and test Kruskal-Wallis test), the variables included in the survey were related to: compare the attitudes of employees in the two sectors and the impact of demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, education, work experience and age) on average grade index competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination.

## INDEX OF COMPETITIVENESS OF SERBIA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

Competitiveness model of the World Economic Forum is the only model on the basis of which the index of competitiveness is calculated and comparison of countries performed in relation to the current situation in tourism. On the basis of the national economy, The World Economic Forum (WEF) developed the competitiveness index of travel and tourism (TTCI-Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index), which is a continuation of the monitoring of competitiveness. TTCI index measures the factors and policies that make the development of tourism and travel sector attractive for different countries (Zecevic, 2011).

Competitiveness Index was being developed during the period of six years: 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013



and 2015. Starting from 2015 Index, methodology has been changed in order to combine four sub-indices, instead of three, which was the case in previous years. The main structural changes were separation of “enabling environment” from “T&T policy and enabling factors”, isolation of Infrastructure subindex, elevation of the role of natural and cultural resources and rationalization of selection of indicators.

It is important to emphasize that this research was done for the purpose of preparing doctoral dissertation which was in the process before the new 2015 Competitive Index methodology.

It used to consists of three sub-indices: sub-index of the regulatory framework of travel and tourism (elements related to politics) that is marked with RF in the tables, sub-index of the business environment and infrastructure (BEI) and sub-index of human, cultural and natural resources (HCN). It is a combination of data that are publicly available, and provided by the International Tourism Organization, the annual reports of the World Economic Forum and institutions from countries that are the subject of tourist visits. Each of the sub-indices contains certain pillars of competitiveness. It contained 14 pillars of competitiveness, namely: 1) political rules and regulations 2) environmental sustainability 3) security 4) health and hygiene 5) prioritization of travel and tourism 6) air transport infrastructure 7) land transport infrastructure, 8) tourism infrastructure 9) infrastructure of information and communication technologies 10) price competitiveness 11) human capital 12) inclination to travel and tourism 13) natural resources 14) cultural resources.<sup>1</sup> The index should be seen as a useful tool, which can point to important indicators of the comparison with competitive tourist destinations (Popescu & Pavlović, 2013).

Serbia has been ranked in the index since 2008, and thanks to these data, we can determine the advantages and disadvantages of Serbia as a tourism destination. The index provides a comparative analysis of the destination (the lowest index score is 1 and the maximum is 7), which is especially important in achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage in relation to the neighboring countries.

As a relatively new tourism market, Serbia can take advantage of this opportunity by creation of the modern tourism product in order to gain a competitive advantage on the modern tourism market. An important role in achieving such objective may be developing sustainable and responsible tourism products, while reaching a double benefit - preservation of natural resources and crea-

tion of tourism products based on them (Damjanović *et al.*, 2013).

Table 1 illustrates the key indicators in the tourism of Serbia, the values that are the subject of the evaluation and the reasons why our country is positioned low in Europe and the world in terms of destination competitiveness.

Table 1. Competitiveness of Serbia in relation to world and European destinations

Year	2008.	2009.	2011.	2013.	2015.
Rank/World	78/130	88/133	82/139	89/140	94/140
Rank/Europe	37/42	38/42	38/42	40/42	41/42
TTCI index	3.76	3.71	3,85	3,78	3,9

Source: [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TT\\_Competitiveness\\_Report/WEF\\_TCCI\\_report\\_2008-2013](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TT_Competitiveness_Report/WEF_TCCI_report_2008-2013)

Based on the data in Table 1, it is concluded that the assessment of the competitiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination is quite low compared to the attractive global tourism destinations.

If the competitiveness of Serbia is observed in comparison to other European countries, it can be concluded that its place is at the bottom of the table. The fact that the ranking of Serbia as a tourism destination has been dropping in the period from 2008 to the present is particularly worrying. During the period from 2008 and 2011, only four countries were ranked lower than Serbia: Ukraine, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova<sup>2</sup>. However, in recent years, it has continued to decline according to the World Economic Forum. In 2013 and 2015, only two countries in Europe were lower ranked than Serbia, namely Albania and Moldova.

According to the data and estimates of the World Economic Forum for 2015, Serbia as a tourism destination occupies the last place in Europe in the aspect of business investments with a score of 3.38. Health and hygiene in our country are evaluated with the highest mark (6.04), which puts Serbia on the 38<sup>th</sup> place out of 141 countries in the world. Natural resources got almost the lowest mark in respect to all European countries with the index of 1.90. Only Moldova has a lower grade for natural resources than Serbia. The conclusion is that air transport infrastructure (2.13), as well as the basic transport infrastructure (2.95), and international openness (2.39) are very badly rated. A very low grade of 1.61

1 [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TT\\_Competitiveness\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TT_Competitiveness_Report_2013.pdf), page 17, date of accessing the site - July 2015.

2 <http://reports.weforum.org/>, date of accessing the site - July 2015.





was given to the cultural resources of Serbia. Although it currently seems that the assessment of the tourist service of 4.50 is good, compared to other European countries and the surroundings, we conclude that Serbia is among the last positioned countries in Europe<sup>3</sup>.

To that end, it is necessary to research which elements are relevant for the assessment of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination and whether the assessment level depends on the sector employees belong to or demographic variables such as gender, education, years of work, experience or age of respondent.

#### ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPETITIVENESS INDEX OF VOJVODINA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE ASPECT OF THE EMPLOYEES OF TOURISM INDUSTRY

Based on the model of competitiveness of the World Economic Forum, a question was set within a questionnaire, on the basis of which the quality of services in the field of the regulatory framework, business environment and infrastructure, and cultural and natural resources (pillars of Competitiveness Index methodology before 2015) was assessed. The objective of the analysis and evaluation of above mentioned fields was to get the index value of the competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination in the aspect of employees in the tourism industry of Vojvodina.

In this regard, it is necessary to research which elements affect the level of the assessment of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination and whether the level of assessment depends on the sector to which employees belong or demographic variables such as gender, education, years of work experience or age of the respondents.

*Evaluate the following elements in the city municipality you live in, with grades 1-7 (1-least represented, 7 - most represented)*

- rules and regulations \_\_\_\_\_
- environmental sustainability \_\_\_\_\_
- safety and security \_\_\_\_\_
- health and hygiene \_\_\_\_\_
- opportunities for the development of air traffic \_\_\_\_\_
- the quality of transport infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_
- tourism infrastructure \_\_\_\_\_
- the price and quality of service \_\_\_\_\_
- human resources in the tourism and hospitality \_\_\_\_\_
- the quality of the accommodation offer \_\_\_\_\_
- natural resources \_\_\_\_\_

Employees in the private sector graded Vojvodina as a tourism destination with an overall score of 3.98, while the public sector services with an average score of 4.24. The results of the descriptive statistics about the index evaluation of the tourism competitiveness of Vojvodina are given in Table 2.

Mann-Whitney test showed that  $p < 0.05$ , which indicates a statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index, with respondents from the private sector assessing elements in Vojvodina as a tourism destination with a lower grade, as opposed to the respondents belonging to the public sector. The average score of the index of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination based on the answers of all respondents was 4.11.

Table 2. Evaluation of the competitiveness index in the tourism of Vojvodina

Marks		All respondents		Private sector (n=102)		Public sector (n=102)	
Average value		4.11		3.98		4.24	
Median		4.00		4		4.08	
SD		0.58		0.47		0.65	
Span		3.0-6.1		3.0-5.8		3-6.1	
Scale 1-7							
3.0-3.5	N (%)	19	( 9.3)	10	(9.8)	9	(8.8)
3.5-4.0	N (%)	75	(36.8)	40	(39.2)	35	(34.5)
4.0-4.5	N (%)	64	(31.4)	41	(40.2)	23	(22.5)
4.5-5.0	N (%)	25	(12.3)	7	(6.9)	18	(17.6)
5.0-5.5	N (%)	16	( 7.8)	3	(2.9)	13	(12.7)
5.5-6.1	N (%)	5	( 2.4)	1	(1.0)	4	(3.9)
Total	N (%)	204	100	102	100	102	100

Source: Authors

<sup>3</sup> <http://reports.weforum.org/2015>, site was visited in January 2016.



The assessment of the value of individual elements within the index of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a tourism destination by all respondents is shown in Table 3, based on which we note that the safety and security got the top mark 5.44, while the tourism infrastructure is estimated with the lowest mark of 2.90.

The public sector assigned the lowest average mark of 3.2 to tourist infrastructure and natural motives with the highest score of 5.85.

Employees in the private sector marked safety and security at the destination with the highest grade of 5.58, while they assessed the tourism infrastructure with the lowest average grade of 2.55 (Table 5)

Based on the assessment of individual elements of the competitiveness index of Vojvodina as a destination, we conclude that there are differences in the level of assessment of elements between the employees in the public and private sectors.

Table 3. The highest and lowest rated components of the competitiveness index by all respondents

		Rules and regulations	Environmental sustainability	Safety and security	Health	Opportunities for air traffic development	The quality of transport infrastructure	Tourism infrastructure	The price and quality of service	Human resources in tourism industry	The quality of accommodation offer	Natural resources	Cultural resources
N	Valid	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	204	102204
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3,57	3,97	5,44	4,46	3,40	3,25	2,90	3,75	3,73	4,41	5,25	5,02
	Median	3,50	4,00	5,00	5,00	2,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	5,00
	Std. Deviation	1,170	1,091	1,056	1,440	2,516	1,100	1,138	1,109	1,142	1,630	1,472	1,402
	Minimum	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2
	Maximum	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	7	7	7	7	7

Source: Authors

Table 4. The highest and lowest rated components of the competitiveness index by the respondents employed in the public sector

		Rules and regulations	Environmental sustainability	Safety and security	Health	Opportunities for air traffic development	The quality of transport infrastructure	Tourism infrastructure	The price and quality of service	Human resources in tourism industry	The quality of accommodation offer	Natural resources	Cultural resources
N	Valid	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3,83	4,07	5,30	4,82	3,37	3,31	3,25	3,76	3,83	3,87	5,85	5,60
	Median	4,00	4,00	5,00	5,00	2,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	4,00	4,00	6,00	6,00
	Std. Deviation	1,235	1,046	,973	1,129	2,571	1,258	1,214	1,187	1,072	1,474	1,230	1,188
	Minimum	2	1	3	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
	Maximum	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	7	6	7	7	7

Source: Authors

Table 5. The highest and lowest rated components of the competitiveness index by the surveyed employees of the private sector

		Rules and regulations	Environmental sustainability	Safety and security	Health	Opportunities for air traffic development	The quality of transport infrastructure	Tourism infrastructure	The price and quality of service	Human resources in tourism industry	The quality of accommodation offer	Natural resources	Cultural resources
N	Valid	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	3,31	3,87	5,58	4,46	3,43	3,18	2,55	3,75	3,62	4,95	4,64	4,45
	Median	3,00	4,00	6,00	5,00	2,00	3,00	2,00	4,00	4,00	5,00	4,00	4,00
	Std. Deviation	1,043	1,132	1,121	1,681	2,472	,916	,940	1,031	1,203	1,607	1,447	1,369
	Minimum	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2
	Maximum	6	7	7	7	7	5	6	7	7	7	7	7

Source: Authors



## THE ANALYSIS OF THE COMPETITIVENESS INDEX OF VOJVODINA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION RELATED TO DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The survey of the descriptive statistics of the assessed responses to the question as to whether the level of the assessment of the competitiveness index of Vojvodina as a tourism destination is related to gender is given in Table 6.

Mann-Whitney test showed that  $p < 0.05$ , which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index between men and women.

- a) Testing the dependence on the assessment index of competitiveness and education of the respondents.  
Kruskal-Wallis test showed that  $p < 0.05$ , indicating

that there is no statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index according to the education level of respondents.

Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics of the assessed responses to the question as to whether the level of the assessment of the value elements of Vojvodina as a tourism destination is related to education.

- b) Testing dependence on the assessment index of competitiveness and years of work experience of the respondents.

Kruskal-Wallis test showed that  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index according to the years of work experience of the respondents.

Table 6. Rating Competitiveness Index of Vojvodina in relation to gender of the respondents

Grades		All respondents		Men (n=105)		Women (n=99)	
Average value		4.11		4.04		4.18	
Median		4.00		3.92		4.08	
SD		0.58		0.59		0.56	
Span		3.0-6.1		3.0-6.1		3.1-5.7	
Scale 1-7							
3.0-3.5	N (%)	19	(9.3)	14	(13.3)	5	(5.0)
3.5-4.0	N (%)	75	(36.8)	40	(38.1)	35	(35.4)
4.0-4.5	N (%)	64	(31.4)	28	(26.7)	36	(36.4)
4.5-5.0	N (%)	25	(12.3)	18	(17.1)	7	(7.1)
5.0-5.5	N (%)	16	(7.8)	2	(1.9)	14	(14.1)
5.5-6.1	N (%)	5	(2.4)	3	(2.9)	2	(2.0)
Total	N (%)	204	100	105	100	99	100

Source: Authors

Table 7. Rating Competitiveness Index of Vojvodina in relation to education of the respondents

Grades		All respondents		High school (n=40)		College (n=61)		University (n=92)		Master (n=11)	
Average value		4.11		3.95		4.18		4.2		4.4	
Median		4.00		3.92		4.08		4.1		4.2	
SD		0.58		0.41		0.56		0.6		0.6	
Span		3.0-6.1		3.0-4.8		3.1-5.7		3.1-5.8		3.6-5.6	
Scale 1-7											
3.0-3.5	N (%)	19	9.3	5	12.5	4	6.6	10	10.9	0	0.0
3.5-4.0	N (%)	75	36.8	16	40.0	26	42.6	31	33.7	2	18.2
4.0-4.5	N (%)	64	31.4	14	35.0	22	36.1	24	26.1	4	36.4
4.5-5.0	N (%)	25	12.3	5	12.5	5	8.2	13	14.1	2	18.2
5.0-5.5	N (%)	16	7.8	0	0.0	3	4.9	11	12.0	2	18.2
5.5-6.1	N (%)	5	2.4	0	0.0	1	1.6	3	3.3	1	9.1
Total	N (%)	204	100	40	100	61	100	92	100	11	100

Source: Authors



Table 8. Assessment of index of competitiveness and years of work experience of respondents

Grades	All respondents		Up to the age of 5		From the age of 6 to 10		From the age of 11 to 15		Over the age of 15	
Average value	4.11		4.14		4.20		4.1		3.9	
Median	4.00		4.08		4.08		4.1		3.8	
SD	0.58		0.65		0.61		0.5		0.4	
Span	3.0-6.1		3.0-6.1		3.0-5.8		3.1-5.8		3.2-5.1	
Total N (%)	204	100	66	32	62	30	44	22	32	16

Source: Authors

Table 9. Assessment of index of competitiveness of Vojvodina related to the age of respondents

Grades	All respondents		Up to 33 years of age		From 34 to 39 years of age		From 40 to 45 years of age		Over 45 years of age	
Average value	4.11		4.16		4.09		4.2		4.0	
Median	4.00		4.08		4.00		4.1		3.9	
SD	0.58		0.70		0.55		0.6		0.4	
Span	3.0-6.1		3.0-6.1		3.1-5.2		3.2-5.8		3.6-5.6	
Total N (%)	204	100	53	26	58	28	52	25	41	20

Source: Authors

Table 8 gives the descriptive statistics of responses to the question as to whether the level of the assessment of the value elements of Vojvodina as a tourism destination is related to years of work experience.

- c) Testing dependence on the assessment index of competitiveness and the age of the respondents.

Kruskal-Wallis test showed that  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the average assessment of the competitiveness index by age of the respondents.

Table 9 illustrates the descriptive statistics of responses to the question as to whether the level of the assessment of the value elements of Vojvodina as a tourism destination is related to years of work experience of the respondents.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the amount of the assessment of the value chain of Vojvodina as a tourism destination varies depending on the sector to which tourism experts in Vojvodina belong.

The conclusion is also that the assessment level of the value chain is not related to any of the observed demographic variables. This is why we will test the second subsidiary hypothesis in the further research with aim to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of Vojvodina as a destination by comparing it with similar destinations and measuring the attitudes of professionals who are in direct contact with tourists at work.

## CONCLUSION

The survey showed that the average score of the competitiveness index of Vojvodina as a tourism destination in the aspect of the surveyed employees in the tourism industry companies of Vojvodina is 4.11.

The private sector's competitiveness index was rated 3.98. Tourism infrastructure was graded with the lowest score of 2.55, and safety and security by the highest rate of 5.58. The public sector assessed the competitiveness of Vojvodina as a destination with 4.24; the lowest grade of 3.25 was given to tourist infrastructure and the highest of 5.85 to natural resources. There are differences in the assessment of the elements of competitiveness of Vojvodina as a destination exclusively in relation to the sector to which respondents belong and are not related to demographic variables (gender, education, years of work experience in the tourism industry or the age of the respondents). Based on the research results, the hypothesis presented in the manuscript is accepted.

Despite the increased value of the competitiveness index of Serbia in 2015 of 3.9 (Table 1), Serbia as a tourism destination is on the unenviable 41st place out of a total of 42 European countries. Based on the evaluation score of individual elements of competitiveness index of Vojvodina of 4.11, it can be concluded that the employees in the tourism industry of Vojvodina have given this region a significantly higher grade, thanks to higher





grades of employees in the public sector. When observing solely the estimates of the private sector (3.98), it is concluded that the approximate value assessment index of competitiveness of Serbia as a destination is 3.9.

Applying competitiveness index as an element for determining the strategic development of tourism in Vojvodina, the strengths and weaknesses of the destination are highlighted and the optimal solution for future development of tourism is proposed.

During the research, we measured the attitudes of professionals employed in the tourism industry of Vojvodina about which segment proves that Vojvodina a competitive tourism destination compared to similar destinations in the region.

Based on these research results, a number of experts pointed out the advantages in terms of natural and cultural motives, gastro offer, events and multiculturalism, while another group of employees emphasized the benefits of Vojvodina in the form of lower prices. The research about rural tourism also showed that Vojvodina can be a competitive and attractive tourism destination in specific segments of offer (Krejić *et al.*, 2016, p. 612). Given the fact that the private sector is financed from its own revenues, attitudes of employees belonging to this sector should be pursued in the future development of tourism in Vojvodina. Tourism organizations as the most widespread form of public enterprises in the tourism industry are financed by the state or local government's budgets and can be seen as an outdated form of business that employs political staff of the ruling structures in Vojvodina.

Although tourism represents a mixed industry which includes the companies of the private and public sector, the attractiveness of observation, type of tourism and service quality differ depending on whether we refer to profit or non-profit organizations (Anderson & Getz, 2009).

Many events and happenings organized by the public sector are non-profit and very costly to implement, and they always require state subsidies. Government intervention in the tourism industry is based on a combination of the merit of good arguments and market failure. Governments may justify their intervention counting on the return of investment, in particular through taxes and investing in infrastructure. Public-private partnership is the justification of many governments for the involvement in the events, promising so many public benefits, and thus increasing the revenue.

However, for the long-term development of the destination and its survival, it is necessary to constantly improve the quality of services so that a destination could

survive the market competition. Future strategies for development of Vojvodina as a tourism destination should be based on research and opinions of tourism experts, with a view to profit and increase the quality of services provided to tourists. Businesses in the tourism market of Vojvodina need to compete, and their effectiveness should be the main criterion of business success.

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