



ANALYSIS OF TOURIST DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract:

For a tourist destination to be in a better position to compete favorably with other tourist destinations, it must provide visitors with superior experiences that make the location more appealing than those offered at competing tourist locations. The purpose of destination management is to utilize and develop the resources that are already available based on strategies that are both clear and successful in order to generate tourism goods and provide extra value for the experience that tourists have. Using indicators that will identify the competitive position and offer instructions for its development, the first stage in the study is defining the competitiveness of destinations. This will be done with the use of indicators. The expansion of tourism in Serbia is a significant possibility for the general growth and improvement of the economy of the nation. The present competitive position of Serbian tourism in the worldwide market is unsatisfactory, and the purpose of this article is to identify and investigate some of the factors that contribute to this unsatisfactory position. On the basis of the necessary study, as well as the Strategy for the Development of Tourism in Serbia, we were able to make some conclusions regarding the competitive position of Jošanica as a tourist destination.

Keywords:

competitiveness, competitiveness analysis, value chain.

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the economic conditions of the 20th and 21st centuries manifested themselves to a large extent in an increase in the participation of the tertiary sector in the economic balances of individual countries, especially tourism activities. Tourism as a phenomenon experienced enormous changes caused by the emergence of the concept of mass tourism, which led to new and different developments on the side of tourist supply, but also on the side of tourist demand. Tourists have become increasingly demanding, they want the maximum level of commitment, a unique and individual offer. New requests from tourists for yet “unseen” destinations are being created, the readiness for specific trips is reaching large proportions, which supports the fact that tourists have breakfast in Tokyo, lunch in New York, and dinner in Paris. In the period from 1970 to 1990. the number of tourists in the Mediterranean increased significantly, in Greece by as much as six times.

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The enormous increase in tourist traffic in those areas, as well as in the areas with tourist flows that are comparable to those in those areas, was the driving force behind the modification of the already-existing ones and the introduction of new tourist destinations from those countries that had been inactive up until that point. This is again causally related to the development of new forms of tourism that enabled the activation of forgotten destinations. These new forms of tourism include the development of ecological tourism, rural tourism, safari tourism, and other similar forms, all of which contributed to a greater tourist utilization of the area. It is increasingly seen at numerous levels, including national, regional, and local, and from a variety of diverse points of view. Competitiveness has evolved into a fundamental principle underlying the contemporary economy. As a result, cities and regions are facing increasing levels of competitive pressure, which presents a number of problems regarding the factors that contribute to a company's increased competitiveness and the best strategies for responding to the difficulties posed by global competition.

COMPETITIVE AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

The tourism of the new age is looking for a unique and recognizable tourist product, constant improvement of the tourist offer, and at the same time preservation of autochthonous elements. It is precisely because of this that relations between competing countries for winning a market position are tightening. Therefore, it is necessary to continuously analyse and monitor the indicators of the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The degree of development of a destination is defined by determinants such as infrastructural development, regulatory and legal frameworks, the number and quality of accommodation facilities, the variety and quality of the catering offer, natural and cultural heritage, personnel potential measured by productivity, i.e. the ability of the destination to produce goods and services using its workforce, resources and investments.

The competitive circle, which is a list of countries that provide the same or a comparable tourist product, is defined in the competitive analysis. This list serves as a reference frame for analysing the relative levels of tourist attraction between different nations.

A more precise definition of the concept of competitiveness depends on the purpose for which it is defined. There are, however, universal elements (Porter, 1990) necessary to understand competitiveness:

- Factors of the competitive game, that is, what determines the competitiveness of companies, sectors or countries;
- Area of analysis, i.e. where that competitive match takes place, i.e. for which 'piece of the cake' companies compete, that is, the tools used in the market competition.

Competitive and comparative advantage

The success of their positioning is responsible for self-evaluation of the capacities and attractiveness they possess, along with the recognition of competitive and comparative advantages. The ability to make quality use of resources in an effective and sustainable manner over the long term is essential to gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. The ability of the state and other institutions to add new values to the natural elements of the offer in either the domestic or international market is what is meant when we talk about having a competitive advantage. According to Marić (2020), the basic factors that determine the level of competitiveness can be classified as:

- price - which can be adjusted more easily, there is a possibility of their adaptation and adaptation to external conditions and
- non-price: quality, standardization, innovation, technology on which tourist destination planners do not have much influence because these are quite fluid categories, difficult to measure and verify. For instance, the competitive role of quality is permanently strengthening thanks to the constant increase in the number of so-called "green consumers" and supporters of ecotourism, as well as the undertaking of a series of measures aimed at its improvement. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.



Ritchie and Crouch (1999) developed the so-called “Calgary model of tourism competitiveness” in which they claim that economic models of competitiveness, such as Porter’s, can be applied in the area of tourist destinations. In that model, destination factors were divided into: • attraction factors and • repulsion factors.

They listed eleven factors of attraction: nature, climate, cultural and social characteristics, general infrastructure, the infrastructure of general service activities, tourism superstructure, accessibility and means of transport, attitude towards tourists, price/cost ratio, economic and social ties and destination uniqueness.

The most important repulsion factors are: security and protection, e.g. political instability, health insecurity, weak health system, laws and entry restrictions like visa regimes. These factors represent barriers to visiting a tourist destination.

Another relevant model of the competitiveness of a tourist destination, which represents only a small modification of the previous one, due to the introduction of the concept of demand, is the Dwyer-Komov model. The most notable quality of this integrated model is that it illustrates the interaction between all of the sources of destination competitiveness, in contrast to the previously processed model, which depicts a relationship in just one direction between all of the components.

Comparative values are values that make up the climate, landscape, ecological areas, etc. that is, the availability of development factors and are quite a static category in contrast to the competitive dynamic category. Comparative advantages are mainly related to natural, but also built resources. It does not necessarily mean that comparative advantages are always used and financially valorized. According to Porter (1990), the fundamental components of comparative advantage may be broken down into the following five categories: There are three types of resources: human resources, physical resources, and knowledge resources. The available financial resources as well as the infrastructure.

In order to neutralize these forces, that is, to build competitive advantages, it is necessary for tourist destinations to develop activities that are better than those of competitors, and in particular, they need to develop activities that differ from competitors and become synonymous with competitive advantages.

In other words, in order to compete successfully, a tourist destination must offer the market more value than its rivals for the same effort invested by tourists or the same value with less effort.

ELEMENTARY DIMENSIONS OF THE COMPETITIVENESS OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

Given that tourism includes different dimensions, it is necessary to find ways to harmonize numerous elements that are in constant disparity.

Multidimensionality (Porter, 1990) is manifested through:

- economic, on which Porter’s diamond of competitiveness is based,
- technological, (the information revolution set serious conditions for the development of tourism and imposed the implementation of technological and informational solutions in the tourism and hotel industry),
- political, (the legal and political instance sets the framework in which tourism activity can take place, mostly by defining acts, e.g. Agenda 21, which defines the scale of development of the concept of sustainable tourism),
- environmental, (the social cost of tourism development, i.e. its impact on the natural environment and its degradation),
- socio-cultural (where an effort is made to maintain the level of the destination’s cultural heritage, providing spiritual and cultural enrichment for tourists and reducing the antagonism of residents).

Therefore, it is clear that competitiveness really represents a dynamic phenomenon that is influenced by numerous factors determined by the above-mentioned types of competitiveness of a tourist destination. Such tendencies of the destination to increase the level of its attractiveness through the cooperation of a number of indicators are expressed mostly from the aspect of economic competitiveness, which directs the development of all others, and is presented through Porter’s diamond of competitiveness.



Diamond of competitiveness is a phrase used in tourism as an expression of the need for partnership, for solid diamond cooperation of all stakeholders in the destination in the public and private sector. The diamond of competitiveness as an economic feature of competitiveness should encourage constant processes of innovation and quality improvement, a high level of productivity and high business efficiency. It consists of (Porter, 1990) four key components:

- production factors
- demand factors
- factors in the public sector, complementary sectors
- strategy, structure and rivalry

A major role is played by the state, which through its legal regulations and procedural measures enables the expansion and easier operation of tourism activities or provides various types of legal or financial assistance to the tertiary sector. It can establish greater control and monitoring through the government sector. In this way, the state creates greater chances for the development of the tourist destination through the networking of all the mentioned factors, which creates an integrated process as a basis for entering international markets.

Competitiveness is achieved by carefully selecting activities from these four groups of factors, which can offer the market unique value for efforts. At the same time, it should be noted that the most competitive destination will be the one that offers tourists greater value for less effort “value for effort”. The state government together with adequate public service plays a significant role in creating the tourism value chain and creating a favorable business environment through various legal procedures and regulations. In the era of globalization, the most optimal way for the survival of the tourism industry, and therefore the tourist destination, is to create a professionally designed tourist product that fully meets the concept of the value chain. The importance of creating and adding value in order to gain and maintain a competitive advantage is being emphasized more and more. In order to use superior value for consumers, as a basis for creating a competitive advantage, an understanding of the value chain of tourism, that is, a tourist destination, is required. This is because in order to use superior value for consumers as a basis for creating a competitive advantage, superior value for consumers must be created. A tourist destination represents a chain, that is, a series of interconnected activities that are necessary to create and offer superior value on the market compared to the competition. Some of the activities within the value chain are crucial for attracting tourists and meeting their needs (accommodation facilities, transport, built attractiveness, tour operators, travel agents), others have a supporting role (guide service, insurance and financial activities related to tourism, educational institutions, media, tourist organizations at all levels). The value chain is a concept that evaluates the various elements that tourists deal with during the preparation for the trip, as well as during the stay in the destination. Each link in the chain creates value from its scope, and a competitive advantage can be gained in each of the links thanks to some of their specificities in the way they are organized, equipped, the level of staff competence, etc. A special source of gaining a destination's competitive advantage can be the very way in which these links are integrated with each other. The evaluation of the value chain is based on the assessment of these activities, taking into account all their positive and negative aspects. The purpose of the value chain assessment is to link the tourism products, services and activities offered in the most efficient way and to define all possible weaknesses and uncertainties in the entire tourism system of a country, so that it is possible to start with the introduction of adequate measures and actions that identified weaknesses, i.e. vagueness, would be removed or reduced. Kotler & Keller (2006) emphasize the importance of the holistic concept in building greater value for consumers, where holistic marketers represent that group of marketers who successfully manage a superior value chain that ensures a high level of service quality. The holistic marketing framework is based on three key premises:

- value research while monitoring the cognitive space of tourists that reflects their existing and latent needs,
- creating value that often requires redefining the concept of attracting tourists or creating a destination brand identity, and
- value delivery with coherent and rapid response and dealing with the competition.



Each of the elements of the value chain can be observed separately by comparing its positive and negative aspects that contribute to a better understanding of the elements and the implementation of the necessary corrective actions in order to improve the quality of the tourist product. In general, it can be stated that a tourist destination is competitive when investments related to tourism have a higher rate of profitability than is the case in other tourist destinations. In this way, these destinations become attractive for investors (due to a higher return on invested capital), for employed businessmen (higher income), that is, for the entire local population (higher level of overall well-being). The competitiveness of a tourist destination on the global market is closely related to various elements of the tourist offer, such as the number and quality of accommodation facilities, the variety and quality of the catering offer, natural and cultural heritage, the condition of the communal infrastructure, but also hospitality, value for money, legal solutions that regulate tourism activities, accessibility, tourist signage, etc.

TOURIST DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS OF BANJA JOŠANICA

The possibilities of tourism development in Banja Jošanica are based on favorable tourist-geographic location, a wealth of natural tourist values (thermo-mineral springs, climatic characteristics, vegetation) and anthropogenic values. Of particular importance is the development and complementarity of spa and rural tourism with mountain tourism. The possibilities for the development of spa-rural tourism in Banja Jošanica are significantly greater than the current state, construction of the material base, content and length of tourist stay.

Banja Jošanica with its natural environment, specific architecture and organization of life can represent a special tourist motive. The further development of tourism in Banja Jošanica would be a significant factor in the transformation of the settlement itself, and on the other hand, it would lead to an increase in the income of the residents of Jošanica who choose to engage in this activity, so that tourism could emerge as the most significant factor in the revitalization of this rural settlement and an essential prerequisite for a more even regional development of the Sokobanja basin.

Tourist-geographic position

Banja Jošanica is located in the north-western part of the Sokobanj basin, which is surrounded by the mountains Rtanj (1567 m), in the north, Ozren (1174 m), in the south, Bukovik (894 m), in the west, Devica (1187 m) and Krstatac (1069 m), in the east (Dakić, 1967). It is 16 km away from Sokobanja, as the administrative, management and tourist center of the municipality. The favorable tourist-geographical position of Banja Jošanica is based on the natural-geographical characteristics, landscape diversity and favorable traffic position towards the most important direction of movement of tourists in our country, the Vardar - Moravian Valley is 9 km from the most important road in this area, Aleksinac - Sokobanja - Knjaževac. With this road route, which is connected by an asphalt road, Jošanica is indirectly connected to all major urban-industrial centers in our country. In the first zone road distance of up to 100 km from Jošanica are Aleksinac, Niš, Zaječar and Bor (Radivojević, 2008). The second zone consists of the cities and industrial centers with a road distance of up to 200 km: Vranje, Leskovac, Jagodina, Paraćin, Kraljevo, Čačak. The third zone consists of urban-industrial centers with a road distance of 200 km to 500 km: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Sombor, Subotica.

Natural tourist values

Attractive natural elements that favor the development of tourism in the area of Banja Jošanica include: thermal mineral springs, mountain environment, and climate. In the past development of tourism in this rural settlement, some of these tourist values have been affirmed (thermos-mineral springs), while the rest are significantly below the limits of optimal possibilities for tourist activation.

There are many different geological structures in this region, and strong geomorphological processes have resulted in the production of many different phenomena and forms. Some of these phenomena and forms provide substantial prospects for tourism to be developed in the area. To begin, we refer to the mountains Rtanj (1567 m) and Bukovik (894 m), which are responsible for closing off the Jošanica valley from the north and



west respectively. These mountains provide a variety of distinct tourist reasons, each with its own high level of appeal to visitors, which complement the well-established spa tourism in the area. Rtanj is distinguished by a mountainous setting that is both picturesque and aesthetically pleasing. It paves the way for the growth of tourism in the areas of excursion-recreational activities, sports-event tourism, winter tourism, and hunting. These numerous kinds of tourism might round out the experience that visitors have while they are in Banja Jonica; as a result, the comprehensive tourism offering of this region would be better able to cater to a variety of subsets of consumer demand. The growth of mountain tourism in this region not only makes a contribution to climate treatment, but it also has a significant recreational component that makes it an attractive tourist destination, particularly during the winter months. This kind of motivating activity has a stimulating and meaningful influence on the growth of spa tourism, and it does so in association with an environment that has been protected and is in good health. The climate in Jošanica is mild because of the city's low elevation (200-500 m above sea level). It has winters that are long, cold, and severe, and summers that are long and hot. The yearly mean temperature of the air is 10.29 degrees Celsius. The month of January has an average temperature of -1.25 degrees Celsius, while the month of July has an average temperature of 21.4 degrees Celsius. Given that the average annual precipitation is 599 millimeters, this spa is considered to have a medium quantity of rainfall. 92 days out of the year see temperatures that are consistently higher than 18 degrees Celsius, making them ideal for outdoor tourist activities. The average temperature in the winter is -0.6 degrees Celsius, while in the spring it is 10.6 degrees Celsius, in the summer it is 20.2 degrees Celsius, and in the fall it is 12.0 degrees Celsius. The daily value of insolation is 5.09 hours, which equates to a yearly value of 1861.5. The months of June (224 h), July (227 h), August (227 h), and September (227 h) have the greatest average number of hours of sunlight (208 h). As a result of the fact that the values of these climatic elements are within the threshold values of the comfort zone or the zone of comfortable feeling, the climate of Jošanica appears not only as a stimulating factor of tourist movements, but also as an important factor in the complementarity of health and spa tourism with tourism in the countryside. The hot mineral springs that are featured in the Jošanica spa (Radivojević, 2008) are the major draw for vacationers.

Apart from thermal mineral springs, the healing factor of Banja Jošanica is also characterized by mineral mud - peloid. Mud is characterized by exceptional healing properties that favor the treatment of rheumatic diseases, so its use can be isolated or in combination with thermomineral springs. In the case of their complementary application with the thermal mineral springs of Sokobanja, it is possible to form a diverse and high-quality offer in the field of health and spa tourism, as well as to achieve their common position on the tourist market.

The variety of biogeographical tourist motives in the area of Banja Jošanica greatly influence the importance of the complementarity of the spa, i.e., health-remedial tourism with rural tourism. The vegetation of this region is represented by different grass and forest phytocenoses. Of special importance for the territory of Banja are forests, i.e. park areas, which have a positive effect on people with their ambient values. Spa vegetation, represented by high-quality and easily accessible forest complexes, has a positive effect on people's characteristics with its picturesqueness, which is one of the prerequisites for the development of spa and recreational tourism.

Anthropogenic tourist values

For the development of tourism in Banja Jošanica, anthropogenic tourist values are also very important, which are represented in this area by archaeological, monumental and ethnographic tourist values. The elements of this complex date from different periods and present the development of historical, economic-political and cultural events in this area. The archaeological sites of Banja Jošanica (Čardište, Beli breg) have not been sufficiently explored to be more adequately valorized and presented to tourists. In contrast to them, the medieval monuments of sacral architecture have special importance for the stimulation of cultural tourism movements directed towards this area. The Church of the Assumption, which dates back to 1557, is one of the oldest buildings of its kind in this part of Serbia. The church is characterized by well-preserved fresco paintings and a collection of ecclesiastical-ethnological character. Ethnographic tourism motifs are represented by specific customs, culinary specialties, folklore and national costumes. They are characterized by originality and authenticity and represent complementary tourist values.



The material base of tourism

The beginnings of tourism development in Banja Jošanica date back to 1969. In addition to that, it is characterized by an extremely unfavorable material base. There are no basic accommodation facilities in this area, and tourist traffic is realized only in complementary facilities. Banja Jošanica has 750 beds, which are in the private sector, and equipped camping space.

Catering activity in the function of tourism development in the countryside has the task of providing nutrition to tourists forming an offer adapted to their requirements. That offer is insufficient for now and includes five catering facilities - one in the social sector and four in the private sector. These are modest facilities, both in terms of capacity and assortment, equipment and workforce. The only thing that stands out is the restaurant Jošanica, with 200 seats, which operates as part of HTP Lepterijsa from Sokobanja and which offers spa guests a wider range and quality of services.

The state of the material base of tourism in Jošanica is still in the initial phase. Its basic characteristic is indiscriminateness and inability to respond to the needs of specific demand segments. Therefore, in future plans for the development and affirmation of the tourist product of Jošanica, special attention should be paid to this category of tourist traffic.

Tourist traffic

In 1969, with the capture of the source and the construction of the first health facility, the conditions were created for the beginning of organized tourist traffic. The current development of tourism in Banja Jošanica indicates that it is still in its initial phase in this area, as evidenced by the small number of tourists, as well as the relatively small number of realized tourist overnight stays, not only in relation to Sokobanja, but also to other competing centers. The reason for this state of affairs should be sought in, first of all, the rather narrow contractive zone of tourist values of Banja Jošanica, poor tourist infrastructure and superstructure, as well as the lack of certain marketing actions that would shape the tourism product of Jošanica and thus present it to the market.

The deterioration of the economic, political and social situation in the country was particularly reflected in the realization of tourist traffic in Banja Jošanica in the period after 1990. The number of guests then decreased to 1,856 (index 31), and the stagnation of tourist traffic culminated in 1999, when a visit of only 120 guests (index 4) was recorded, who had only 1,202 overnight stays (index 3). The increase in the number of tourists in the period after 2000 is insignificant. The spa is visited by less than 1,000 guests, who make only about 8,000 overnight stays per year. In the structure of the number of guests, domestic tourists are dominant, which indicates a local and regional contractive zone of tourist values of Banja Jošanica. On average, they stay for about 11 days, which means that visitors to Banja Jošanica exclusively use its healing factor, (Radivojević, 2008) that is, they use their stay in the Spa for treatment.

CONCLUSION

The current level of tourism valorization of Banja Jošanica is not satisfactory. Further development of tourism in this rural area should be based on the complementary development of spa, village, mountain and eco tourism. More types of tourism that have the conditions for development in this area can influence more complex tourist equipment and recognition of the area and the formation of appropriate multivalent year-round tourism.

The favorable geographical position of Banja Jošanica, its proximity and good traffic connection with Sokobanja, as well as the mountainous environment, offer the possibility of combining balneotherapy with climatotherapy. The well-preserved original natural values also influence the possibility of successful tourism development in Banja Jošanica. Rich thermal mineral springs, stimulating climate, diverse forest cover, are just some of the natural benefits for the formation of a special tourist product, which, in correlation with the specific ambiance of rural life, can meet the demands of tourism of special interest.



An important prerequisite for the further development and affirmation of tourism in this rural area is the material base. Considering that Banja Jošanica does not have its own accommodation facilities, it is necessary to build them, both medical institutions for treatment, rehabilitation and prevention, as well as supporting facilities. Apart from that, it is necessary to modernize the accommodation facilities in private households, as well as the construction of modern catering facilities, which would accept visitors staying in Banja Jošanica itself, but also from Sokobanja. In this way, Banja Jošanica would be enabled to develop more types of tourism and enable its better tourist connection with Sokobanja.

The wealth of thermo-mineral springs, healing mud, climatic features, cultural heritage, existing and future equipment with medical institutions, accommodation and hospitality facilities, together with the development of mountain tourism, are of particular importance not only for achieving a larger volume of tourist traffic, but also for future development plans of tourism in this area. The complementary development of spa, rural and mountain tourism, with the possibility of applying the healing factors of thermo-mineral springs and climate, would indirectly affect both the structure and average length of stay, as well as the enrichment of the content of the stay of tourists, and not only those who use the healing factor, but also those who spend their vacation in sports, recreation or cultural events.

The planned and targeted development of tourism in Banja Jošanica would appear as a factor in improving the economic and social situation of the rural settlement itself. There are opportunities for the efficient integration of numerous activities here. In this context, “it is necessary to emphasize the development of those activities that, such as agriculture, forestry, crafts, handicrafts, souvenir production, small industry, can multiply with tourism” (Stanković & Pavlović, 2005). Such development, indirectly, would influence the activation of local potentials and raise the motivation of the rural population to prevent damage to the natural environment, organize, develop the rural space as a long-term perspective for living.

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