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POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS TOURISM IN SERBIA

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Abstract: The development of sports tourism in the modern age is linked to the concept of sustainability. Sports tourism is a specific form of tourism that involves the use of ecological, economic and social principles of sustainability. Recreational sports in today's conditions become an integral part of the lives of both people at home and those who go on trips, so tourist destinations have turned to the development and improvement of sports tourism. Destinations located in areas of rural development have enormous potential for the development of sports tourism, and they have the greatest potential if they are in the initial stages of development. Serbia is well-known in the world of sports, so the development of sports tourism can be recognized in neighboring countries and in other countries that have insufficiently used this market. It is Serbia that can provide education in the field of sports tourism to neighboring countries. The countries of the Western Balkans are undervalued in the context of tourism development, so in the coming period it is necessary to determine which elemental services would provide a faster incentive for more intensive development. For the purposes of this paper, research was conducted that will provide answers about the possibilities of sustainable development of sports tourism in Serbia. The total number of respondents is 200. The survey was conducted online and included all regions in Serbia.

Keywords: sports tourism, tourist destination, research, concept of sustainable development and Serbia

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Introduction

Sport and tourism have become closely related in recent years. More and more people actively or recreationally engage in sports, mostly to maintain or improve their own health. Likewise, sports and sports facilities have become one of the main reasons for tourist arrivals in certain destinations. On the other hand, sustainable development has become the main topic of most research considering the development of tourism itself and its mass. Climate changes, the constant growth of the world population and the increase in the number of trips, raise the question of how many possibilities there are for the growth and development of tourism and how far destinations can provide tourists with the best service, at a favorable price, and give them maximum satisfaction at a given moment. As a tourist destination, Serbia has many parts: a spa and a mountain area that stands out for its specific features. Serbia counts more and more arrivals and overnight stays from year to year. Natural beauty, lowlands, cultural heritage and unexplored areas are a good prerequisite for the improvement of both tourism and sports tourism. The primary research conducted for the purposes of this paper analyzes the motives and attitudes of potential tourists regarding the motivation for visiting Serbia. Likewise, the goal of the research is to examine how and to what extent new contents and a greater offer of sports tourism influence the selection of the Continental Region as a potential destination and whether such a form of tourism is sustainable. Please strictly follow the formatting instructions and styles provided in this manual. Do not change the font size or line spacing to fit more text into the limited number of pages. The subject of the thesis is to investigate the possibilities of sustainable development of sports tourism in Serbia as a tourist region. The aim of the paper is to show all the possibilities for sustainable development in the territory of Serbia and the possibility for the development of sports tourism.

The concept and importance of sports tourism

Sports tourism, active vacation, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, trends in tourism, these are all terms that are used more and more often in the tourist world. Sports tourism can be said to be a term that has almost as many definitions as there are authors who mention it. In the period from 1993 to 2014, sports tourism was defined 31 times (Sobry, et al., 2016). One of the authors who define it is Bartoluci, who states that sports tourism is a specific form of tourism in which sport is the main motive for the travel and stay of tourists in a certain destination (Bartoluci, et al., 2016). Along with Bartolucci, we should also mention Gibson's approach, which distinguishes "three domains of sports tourism: active sports tourism, which refers to travel with the aim of participating in sports; then there is event sports tourism, which refers to travel with the

aim of watching a sports event; and finally, nostalgic sports tourism that includes visits to sports museums, famous sports arenas and finally sports themed cruises (Gibson, 1998). Sports tourists travel outside their place of permanent residence for more than 24 hours, but less than one year mainly for: participating in physical activity, watching physical activity or visiting sports-related attractions (Kesar,2019). The definition of a sports tourist is the one that states that it is "an individual who participates in sports on vacation (Gibson, 1998). Along with the definitions of sports tourism, it should be pointed out that sports tourism distinguishes between hard and soft sports tourism. Hard sports tourism is a form of tourism that attracts a large number of visitors to a specific place to witness a specific sporting event such as Formula 1 races or the World Cup (Singh et al.,2016). Soft sports tourism represents all tourists who travel to participate in recreational activities such as hiking, skiing or even rafting (Singh et al.,2016). Sports tourism is "a significant travel activity regardless of whether it is a primary, secondary or tertiary feature of the trip. In addition, Robinson points out that "sports tourism can be divided into two areas of focus: the difference between those who travel primarily for sport (sport tourism) and those where sport appears as a secondary option (sport tourism)" (Robinson, et al.,2004).

Kesar conceptually defines sports tourism as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Definition of sports tourism

	SPORTS TOURISM	TOURIST SPORTS
BROAD MEANING	Passive or active participation in a sporting event	Visitors who are actively or passively involved in sports as a secondary activity
NARROWER SENSE	Recreational sports outside the domicile	Visitors who participate in some form of sports recreation, and the participation is accidental

Source: Kesar, 2019

The urbanized way of life encourages people to play more and more sports and actively participate in sports activities. In the same way, playing sports improves people's health, boosts immunity and helps fight various diseases. Although people still perceive 3S (sun, sea, sand) tourism, there are more and more people who are looking for a more active vacation, destinations with various activities and opportunities to practice certain sports or even destinations that organize sports events. Sports help

people to deal with everyday stress, busy lifestyles, noise, social and media pressures and similar life problems.

Sports tourism has three dimensions. The first dimension is substantive, in which sports tourism is observed through various activities. The second is the spatial dimension, which is determined based on whether sports tourism takes place outdoors or indoors. The third dimension is the temporal dimension in which sports tourism is defined based on the season or term in which it takes place.

According to the demands, preparedness of the participants, danger and risk, Kesar sports tourism is divided into two basic segments:

- recreational (soft-recreational) – swimming, trekking, bicycle tours, golf, tennis, aqua aerobics
- hard-adventure – extreme sports; rafting, paragliding, mountain biking, free climbing, bungee jumping (Kesar, 2019).

Sports tourism appears in the following forms:

- competitive sports tourism
- winter sports and recreational tourism
- summer sports and recreational tourism.

The concept of sports tourism was explained in the previous subsection, and in order to more easily connect the concepts of sports tourism and trend, it is necessary to define the concept of trend. A trend is most often associated with a certain change in a phenomenon in the future, in this case, that phenomenon is tourism. "Trend means the direction of development of some phenomenon in time (in relation to the previous state) or in relation to some other phenomenon (in relation to something)". Trends can indicate two changes, dynamic change and static change (Hendija, 2016).

There are several types of trends in tourism that are interrelated. They are the most represented according to the place of origin in the tourist market, namely tourist demand trends and tourist supply trends. Čavlek describes tourist demand trends as changes in people who participate or would like to participate in tourist movements, and tourist supply trends as changes in the market of goods suppliers. and services offered at certain prices to meet tourist needs.

Hendia states that sports and sports tourism have become one of the newer qualitative trends in the tourist market. However, both in tourism in general and in sports tourism there are trends that can be observed in a broader sense (tourism as a whole) and in a narrower sense (sports tourism). Some of the trends that concern tourism itself, and are also visible in sports tourism, are (Hendija, 2016):

- climate change
- demographic changes
- trips to destinations of preserved nature
- encouraging sustainable tourism
- technology development
- an offer aimed at an active and healthy life.

The development of technology on the one hand helps in the development of man and his way of life, but it also affects the health of each individual and how that individual spends his daily life. Online platforms that can be accessed from the comfort of a comfortable armchair, as much as they help, they also reward people in such a way that people move much less. With the advent of digital media and channels, all information is available in just a few steps. Destinations use such channels to promote their offer and new contents. New trends in sports tourism resulted from the development of technology such as virtual sports, more precisely e-sports. These include new sports such as bungee jumping, paragliding and skydiving. Likewise, sports events, such as the Olympic Games or the World Championships, become one of the main reasons for travel. Considering that tourists choose destinations and decide to travel based on their motives and habits, more and more destinations and service providers offer the possibility of a vacation focused on an active and healthy life, which is the complete opposite of traditional habits and forms of travel. In addition, a large number of destinations invest in improving their offer based on the sustainable development of the destination and tourism itself.

Sustainable development has become a major topic in the last thirty years, mostly thanks to the development of man, society, and technology. By 2015, over 5,000 scientific and research papers related to the concept of sustainable development were published (Ruhanen, et al., 2015).

The consequence of the great interest in this topic is climate change, which is already visible to the naked eye, and mass travel of people, more precisely mass tourism. With the development of technology, man also developed. However, although life has become much easier and more efficient, there have been negative consequences in nature and the environment. The number of people is constantly growing, new residential buildings, business centers are being built, an increasing number of people are traveling to destinations that, along with the local population, cannot accept all those tourists. People travel to destinations that only the local population knew about. Why? Urban life, information available everywhere, media and similar digital channels have made it possible to choose destinations and escape from everyday life. They are looking for undiscovered places, beautiful nature where one day hotels or luxury resorts will be built, and all this so that people can enjoy and forget about their everyday life. This is

where the problem arises. Selfishness and hunger for money caused man to worry about his development and how to make life easier for himself, while forgetting what development means, and even more importantly, sustainable development.

Development must ensure positive change in the future, and for this to be possible it must be sustainable (Krajinović, 2015). Relatedly, such development should meet the needs of current generations without diminishing the possibility for future generations to meet their needs in the same way (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). In order to achieve sustainable development, there must be an optimal balance between environmental protection, social equality and economic well-being, while satisfying traditional product requirements (Krajinović, 2015).

Numerous factors and indicators relate to the overall level of sustainability in the destination. It was mentioned that the business sector is not the only one responsible for the implementation of the concept of sustainable development, but synergy is needed between business entities, the public sector, social communities and individuals. Their cooperation can influence the quality and success of the implementation of sustainable development, both in the entire economy and in tourism, which represents a mass social activity (Amerta et al..2018).

Definitions of the terms sustainable development and sports tourism were explained in previous chapters. However, what about the term sustainable development of tourism? Lately, the development of tourism in the world has been observed exclusively from a sustainable aspect, namely the protection of natural and cultural heritage (Amerta et al..2018).

Due to the desire for the highest possible profit, better image and reputation on the tourist market, numerous destinations neglect their opportunities and their own carrying capacities. Carrying capacity is a term used to explain the maximum number of people who can visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing unacceptable effects on the physical, economic and sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in visitor satisfaction (UNWTO 2018).

Amerta states that the basic principles of sustainable tourism development are:

- maintaining the quality of the environment
- benefits for the local community and tourists
- maintaining the connection between nature and tourism
- maintaining the connection between the local community and the environment
- creation of dynamic conditions adapted to carrying capacities
- the unique mission of all investors towards sustainable development.

The most difficult task of any destination is to provide quality service, to satisfy the needs of tourists, but also to satisfy the needs of the local community, to ensure the attractiveness of the destination, without harming biodiversity. In addition, it is necessary to create an image of the destination in order to be recognized on the tourist market.

Sustainable development of sports tourism is a demanding and complex task. Sports tourism opens up new jobs and the opportunity to make a profit. Depending on the nature of the sports tourism product, more precisely the activities that can be carried out in the destination, the local community and the population participate in the implementation of these activities through the sale of related equipment, giving instructions and leading tours. In order for this to be possible, cooperation between the private and public sectors is needed, as well as the involvement of the local community, which ultimately results in the quality development of a particular destination. In this way, the destination encourages the employment of the population and the productivity of the entire community.

Sports tourism improves the attractiveness and popularity of the destination, and expands the tourist offer. This prolongs the stay of tourists and their consumption, but also achieves the dispersion of tourists within the destination, which reduces the pressure on traditional services and thus promotes the sustainable development of the destination itself. Thanks to this, the sustainability and sustainable economic development of the destination is promoted and a positive image of the destination is created.

Sports are mostly associated with football, basketball, the Olympic Games and the World Championships. Higham claims that destinations that want to develop sports tourism should focus on smaller sports competitions and sports activities in order to achieve sustainable development, instead of large sports events (Higham, 2018). Kurtzman divided sports tourism activities into 5 categories, with each category subdivided.

The first category of sports tourism activities are sports manifestations (Kurtzman, 2005).:

- Olympics
- Regional/National/International sports competitions
- World Championships • Marathons
- League competitions (professional and amateur)
- Friendly competitions
- Races/Regattas
- Sports festivals.

The next category according to Kurtzman is sports attractions (Kurtzman, 2005):

- Sports Museums/Halls of Fame
- Sports conferences
- Sports theme parks
- Bungee jumping
- Rafting on rapid waters
- Golf courses, ski resorts
- Stadiums
- Sports schools.

The third category of sports tourism activities are sports tours (Kurtzman, 2005):

- Professional sports tours
- Sports school tours
- Tours of sports institutions/locations/events
- Safari games
- Training tours
- Cycling and walking tours
- Trekking/mountaineering tours
- Ski trips
- Adventure tours
- Diving.

Then, there is the category of sports resorts (Kurtzman, 2005):

- Golf resorts
- Ski resorts
- Fitness and Spa resorts
- Tennis resorts
- Backpacks
- Multifunctional sports resorts
- Sports hotels.

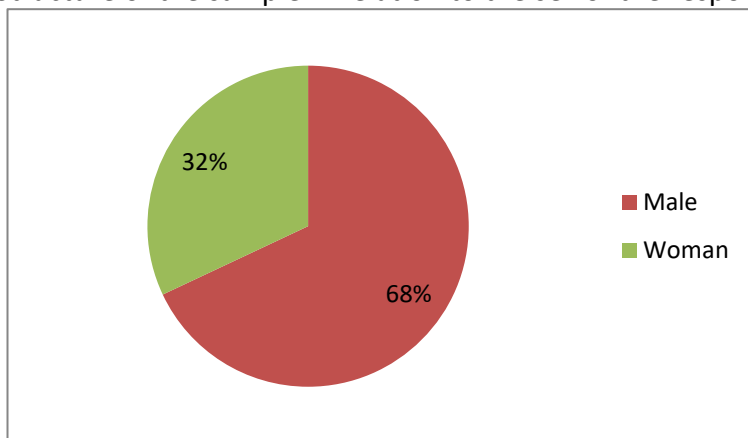
The last category of sports tourism activities are sports cruises (Kurtzman, 2005).

- Luxury sports cruises
- Golf/tennis cruises
- Cruises with sports conferences
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Sailing
- Fitness and health cruises.

Research results

The total research sample consists of 200 respondents of different gender, age, level of education, occupation and amount of monthly income. The research was conducted in the period from the beginning of October to the end of November 2023, in such a way that respondents were sent an invitation to participate in the research via email.

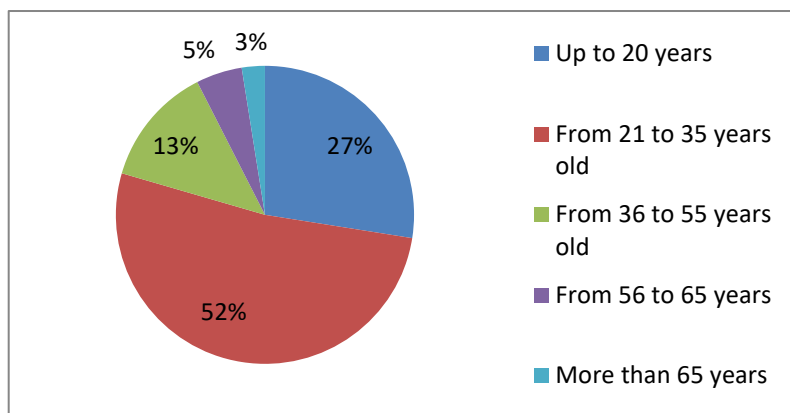
Figure 1. Structure of the sample in relation to the sex of the respondents



Source: Authors

When it comes to the gender of respondents, 32% of female respondents and 68% of male respondents participated in the research (Figure 1).

Figure 2. Structure of the sample in relation to the strict structure of the respondents

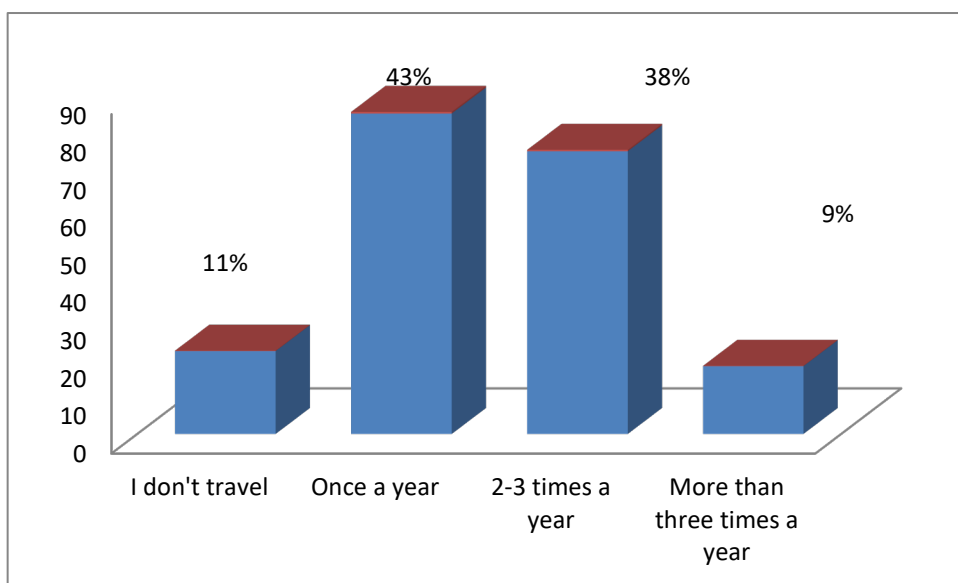


Source: Authors

When it comes to the age of the respondents, the majority of respondents are in the age category of 21 to 35 years (52%), followed by respondents aged up to 20, who make up a little more than a quarter of the sample, and then respondents aged 36 to 55 (13%) . The smallest percentage of the research sample consists of the oldest respondents, aged over 65 (3%) and aged 56 to 65 (3.0%). The sample is not uniform according to the age of the respondents.

The structure of respondents in relation to work status makes up 68% of respondents, then student status 18%, freelancer 13% and Unemployed only 3%.

Figure 3. Structure of the sample of respondents in relation to travel in Serbia



Source: Authors

The largest number of respondents traveled once a year, and also a larger number traveled 2-3 times during this calendar year.

The structure of the sample in relation to playing sports indicates that 88% of respondents play some kind of sport. Only 12% have no activity. According to the survey, 78% of respondents have an active vacation. They mostly swim, bike, run and engage in some activity. In the survey, 54% of them expressed the need for rest, 20% for entertainment, and 19% of respondents travel to do sports.

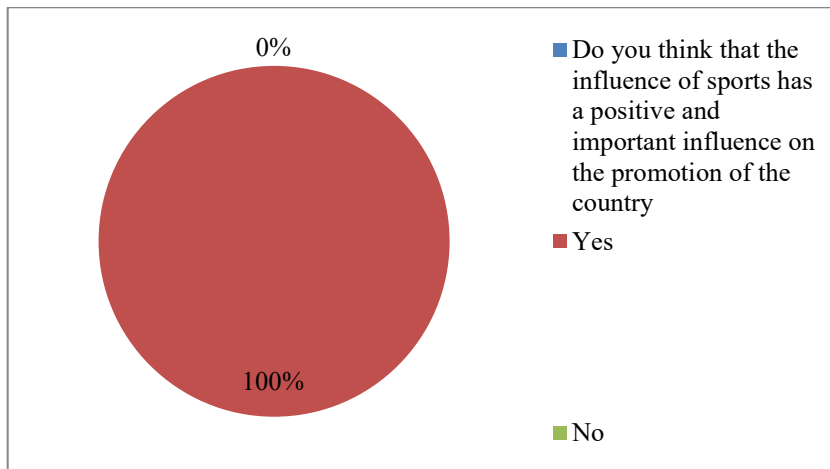
Figure 4. Structure of the destination selection importance sample

Evaluate what is important to you when choosing a destination	5 Extremely important	4 Important	3 Important and not important	2 Less important	1 It doesn't matter
Preservation of the environment	75%	15%	5%	5%	0%
Service price	98%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Quality of accommodation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Food quality	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Proximity to destination	15%	35%	45%	5%	0%
Availability of content	63%	26%	11%	0%	0%
Destination popularity	25%	45%	30%	0%	0%
Climate factor	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Manifestations	22%	19%	38%	10%	11%
Parks and green areas	58%	35%	5%	2%	0%
Walking paths	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fun content	28%	38%	34%	0%	0%
Sports content	18%	72%	5%	3%	2%
Excursion offer	82%	10%	8%	0%	0%
Price-quality ratio	95%	3%	2%	0%	0%

Source: Authors

Based on the analysis, we can conclude that the largest number of respondents is engaged in cycling 48% and fitness/gym and aerobics 45%.

Figure 5. Structure of the sample in relation to the opinion of the promotion of sports for Serbia



Source: Authors

Opinion 100% of respondents believe that Serbia has potential for development.

Conclusion

Sports tourism offers numerous opportunities for achieving sustainable tourism development at the destination level. Busy lifestyle, stress, pressure from society and the media force people to look for salvation in an active holiday. Instead of traditional ways of traveling, in which sightseeing the cities, enjoying the sun or swimming in the sea, tourists choose destinations with a diverse offer with the possibility of engaging in sports activities. Sports tourists, with various activities, explore cities, nature, and cultural heritage. Although more demanding, environmentally conscious sports tourists go to areas of untouched and unexplored nature. Sustainable development of tourism is the main goal of all destinations where tourism is developed. Mass tourism is still the dominant product, but it is unsustainable in the long term if it is not managed. Nature is being destroyed, the life of the local community is almost completely neglected, and costs are increasing year by year. A large number of destinations are worried about the future, considering that governments only care about income and profit as much as possible, and do not care about the well-being of the destination, how mass affects the people living in that destination and how nature supports a large number of people in one place. Sustainable tourism thus becomes not only the main

but also the only goal that destinations want to achieve in the future. In addition, the disease caused by the new corona virus reduced the number of trips, brought service providers and destinations to the brink of collapse, but also gave destinations the opportunity to change their policy and development strategy, to recover from mass tourism and focus on sustainable tourism. It remains to be seen in what direction and in what way the tourism development strategy in Serbia will be set. Likewise, the problems caused by the new corona virus can change tourism as it existed until today, the way of traveling and staying in destinations. The question is what the future of world and Croatian tourism will look like.

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