

## GENERATIONAL COHORTS AFFILIATION AS A BASIC BEHAVIOURAL DETERMINANT OF CONGRESS TOURISM PARTICIPANTS

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### SUMMARY

#### **Purpose**

Tourism, as a rapidly transforming area in the sphere of supply and demand, is experiencing constant and rapid change, both at the international and the domestic markets. Such rapid development leads to the emergence of specific forms of tourism. One such form is congress tourism, an important segment of tourism with notable qualitative, quantitative and financial effects on the economy of each particular country which, as such, is becoming increasingly significant by affecting the extension of the tourist season. The development of congress tourism brings multiple benefits for both: organizers and the destination, through the development of infrastructure and innovating supply. In recent decades, the meetings industry has experienced significant growth and has become a truly global phenomenon. Large business gatherings, especially those international, contribute to economic benefits, but also to the image of the hosting destination. Business gathering are the promoters of the destinations. At the same time they are extending the tourist season. Satisfied participants often return to the destination in a private arrangement.

Just like for most organizers, the main economic objective of organizing a congress is profit making. In everyday business, especially in times of global financial crisis, there is an increasing pressure on the congress organizers to ensure positive financial effects of business meetings. Since attendance, or the number of participants, is the best predictor of financial results, attracting more participants becomes their main task, commonly described by the term "delegate boosting". With the increase in the number of congresses and conferences, understanding of participants' congressional experience

assessment is becoming more important than ever. At the same time, many companies are looking for ways of reducing operating expenses. Business trips are among the most common elements on which budget cuts are applied, resulting in a declining congress and conference attendance of national and international participants.

The main purpose of this study was to develop a conceptual framework to understand convention attendees' evaluation of convention experience based on generational cohort belonging, in order to better understand their return intention. Since there are four generational cohorts in the labor market, this research was conducted with the purpose to identify behavioral intention of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Millennials regarding their congress experience. Specifically, the evaluation of congress experience was investigated through four constructs, namely attractiveness of congress destination, possibility for social networking and professional education, perceived multidimensional value through emotional, functional and social value and behavioral intentions as the last construct. Increasingly fierce competition among congress organizers and host destination suggests the need to understand the return intention of congress attendees, which incurs great impact on the financial benefits of both convention organizers and host destinations. Based on the extensive literature review of congress and business tourism, hospitality and general marketing research, constructs of interest were identified and the hypothetical relationships were established for testing.

For the purposes of the dissertation, data was collected from the primary and secondary sources. Primary data were used in the empirical part of the research. They were collected through an on line questionnaire. Secondary data were collected from domestic and foreign scientific and professional literature and through online sources.

### **Methodology**

University employees elected to scientific backgrounds were the target population for research of the congress tourism participants' behavioural intentions. The main reason for making them target population is the fact that these employees have an obligation to participate in congresses, conferences or symposium, which at the same time enables them to educate themselves, but also to publish their research in congress proceedings. Sample of this research is made up of employees of all state universities in the Republic of Croatia: Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, University of Dubrovnik, University of Rijeka, University of Split, University of Zadar and University of Zagreb.

Out of a total of 1,228 responses, detail analysis and elimination of incomplete on-line surveys, led to the final sample of 981 correctly completed survey questionnaires, with a return rate of 12.94%. For the purpose of the survey, respondents were asked to answer the questions via a on line questionnaire based on experience gained at the last congress held outside their work or residence place and where they stayed for more than 24 hours. The questionnaire consists of 6 units and contains 55 variables.

Techniques of descriptive statistics were used for the presentation of indicator calculations, frequency calculations and graphical representations. The differences in proportions between groups were tested by Chi-square test, and the relationship between

the nominal variables was expressed by the Cramer V measure and the additional quantified ratio of appearance was expressed by univariate logistic regression methods. In order to form a subgroup, cluster analysis was used based on the Ward coupling and Euclidean distance, while the optimal number of clusters was determined by the dendrogram method based on the Calinski-Harabasz pseudo index.

### **Findings**

Based on the conceptual and empirical research, it is possible to confirm the basic scientific hypothesis of this doctoral dissertation: Belonging to a generational cohort influences the behavioral intentions of congress participants. In order to support this claim, the following will summarize the findings of the empirical part of the research and highlight the application of the results in theory and practice.

By analyzing individual segments of a congress destination and how it is perceived by members of the generational cohort, it is possible to conclude the following: accessibility of the congress destination is important to older generational cohorts, especially to Baby Boomers, and it certainly plays a large role in the decision-making process whether to attend the congress. They give less importance to the integral destination product in which they differ from the younger generations. The gastronomic offer as well as the cultural attraction of the destination have been best rated by Millennials, while Generation Y shows the most interest in shops and entertainment in the congress destination. Better perceptions of the congress destination suggest that the destination, along with its accompanying tourist facilities, plays a significant role in congress selection precisely among members of the younger generations such as Millennials and members of Generation Y.

Presentations by prominent speakers in the working field, the possibility of getting insight into changes / new developments in the profession, as well as the ability to exchange knowledge and ideas, are of particular importance to older generations, especially Baby Boomers and to Generation X. Such statistics points out the importance of the professional development for the members of the older generations. Social networking is equally important to Millennials and Baby Boomers. What Millennials disagree with their older counterparts is the claim that attending congress improves their status in the profession. It can be concluded that congress level of expertise is important when deciding whether to participate. Baby Boomers attach greater importance to professional development, while Millennials place emphasis on social networking.

By analyzing the multidimensional perceived value of congress, the following is concluded: there is no statistically significant difference between congress participants, members of different generational cohorts, in assessing the emotional value of congress, which is not the case for the other two multidimensional congress values. Baby Boomers think the cost of participation is proportional to the congress benefits, which means they best evaluate the functional value of congress. Attending a congress helps them feel accepted by the profession and at the same time it improves their status among colleagues, leading to the conclusion that they recognize the importance of the social value of congress.

As the older generation cohorts rate congress better and less attention they give to the congress destination, they are more likely to recommend the congress to their colleagues. When it comes to younger cohorts specifically Millennials, it could be concluded that they have a greater role to play in choosing a congress, so they are much more critical in deciding whether to attend the same congress in the future.

### **Originality of the research**

Conducted research revealed the correlation between belonging to the generational cohort and the way of evaluating congress level of expertise and congress destination, as well as the behavioral intention of the congress participants in terms of their willingness to attend the same congress in the future. Previous research identified the most influential motivators for decisions making about attending the congress. The scientific contribution of this research is evident in the new division of participants based on belonging to the generational cohorts.

The research findings provide meaningful information for associations, host locations, and meeting planners allowing them to identify factors influencing conventions attendees' satisfaction and return intention. Obviously, those findings will be useful to congress organizers in order to create better congress programs and to use more appropriate marketing strategies for reaching target generational cohorts.

**Keywords** congress tourism, participants of congress tourism, the behavior of congress participants, organizers of congress events, generational cohorts

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## **SERVICE QUALITY MEASUREMENT IN NATIONAL PARKS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA: APPLICATION OF MODIFIED ECOSERV MODEL**

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### **SUMMARY**

#### **Purpose**

For many years, service quality has been a field of high interest in scientific and professional debates due to the significant benefits and competitive advantages that a high quality of service can bring to organisations in various economic sectors. In order to be able to properly analyse, evaluate and improve service quality, it is necessary to measure it appropriately, which includes taking into account the specific characteristics of the economic sector in which the analysis is conducted. Much of the scientific work in the field of service quality is based on the disconfirmation paradigm, suggesting that service quality can be operationalised as the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions. This theoretical framework is used in this thesis as well. An implication of this approach is that the user's perspective represents the core of the service quality assessment. Service quality is often conceptualised as multidimensional, but the dimensions of service quality are not the same in each environment. It is therefore important to determine the specific factors that define service quality in the area of interest.

The main goal of this doctoral thesis is to analyse, understand and measure the determinants of service quality in ecotourism, a sector that has grown steadily in recent years at the global level. The richness and preservation of natural resources are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the development of diverse and high-quality ecotourism. This can be achieved by setting up or upgrading a service quality infrastructure that meets the expectations and needs of eco-tourists while at the same time contributing to the economic, ecological and social aspects of ecotourism. To do this, organisations providing ecotourism services need to understand which factors are important for determining service quality in ecotourism in order to be able to better assess the strengths and weaknesses of their offer.

In addition to the analysis of service quality in ecotourism, this thesis investigates a secondary issue which is the impact of service quality on destination image and future behavioural intentions. Such relationships, although potentially important, represent an under-researched area in the context of ecotourism. Based on the limited existing research, it can be suggested that this analysis can contribute to a better understanding of the potential impacts of service quality in the area of ecotourism.

Despite ecotourism being a growing segment of tourism as a whole, the number of papers which comprehensively deal with service quality in ecotourism and the abovementioned related concepts is somewhat limited, especially in Europe. Furthermore, no comprehensive empirical measurements of service quality in all eight national parks of the Republic of Croatia have so far been carried out. Since service quality plays a significant role in further developing ecotourism, this research gap can be considered a problem. National parks represent one of the main touristic attractions in the Republic of Croatia and constitute an important part of domestic ecotourism. They are therefore a valid environment to examine service quality in the Croatian ecotourism sector.

Based on the above, the main scientific hypothesis of the doctoral dissertation was formulated: using scientific conceptual and empirical knowledge about service quality in ecotourism, the dimensions which affect the service quality in national parks as part of ecotourism can be determined, and a model that can contribute to the effective monitoring and measurement of service quality can be suggested, with the additional aim of determining the influence on the destination image and future behavioural intentions as well as contributing to a higher level of service quality in Croatian tourism. In addition, 10 auxiliary research hypotheses were developed.

The existing literature on quality, service quality, ecotourism, destination image, and future behavioural intentions has been analysed. The role and importance of service quality in general, as well as in ecotourism, is stressed, and in this context, the specific features of ecotourism services with an emphasis on the sustainability element are presented. Since the concept of service quality represents one of the main interests of this thesis, a further review of models that conceptualise service quality is provided, with special focus on SERVQUAL and ECOSERV models.

### **Methodology**

The conceptual model of the thesis has been developed using a modified version of the ECOSERV model. The main modifications include additional service quality variables related to sustainability and the measurement of both expectations and perceptions of service quality. In addition, the overall conceptual model examines the influence of the service quality dimensions of the modified ECOSERV model on the overall service quality, destination image and future behavioural intentions, as well as the influence of destination image on future behavioural intentions.

The model was tested in the setting of national parks in the Republic of Croatia to examine service quality in domestic ecotourism, first in a pilot phase and then in the main study. Data for the main study were collected in all eight Croatian national parks using a questionnaire consisting of six sections including expected and perceived service

quality, overall service quality, the destination image, future behavioural intentions and the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. A total of 541 valid questionnaires were collected from national park visitors. Subsequently, an empirical analysis was carried out using univariate, bivariate and multivariate parametric statistical methods.

### **Findings**

A descriptive analysis was used to provide an overview of the respondents' socio-demographic profile. In addition, the expectations and perceptions of respondents were analysed and a descriptive gap analysis was performed. The highest visitor expectations in terms of service quality were related to the use of park facilities, as well as to the staff who were expected to help. For perceptions, visitors rated highest the sense of security in the national park and visually appealing natural attractions. A negative gap was identified for all the measured items, indicating that the visitors had higher expectations than the perceptions of service quality. This is not an uncommon result in service quality literature and it should be pointed out that the overall service quality was assessed as relatively high, i.e. the visitors of the national parks seemed to perceive the overall quality of services quite positively.

The dependent t-test confirmed that expectations differed in a statistically significant way from perceptions. To identify the existence of differences between socio-demographic groups in view of their service quality expectations, perceptions, and the corresponding ECOSERV gap, an independent t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used as part of the bivariate analysis. The results show that for most of the socio-demographic characteristics there is no clear pattern. The main statistically significant differences were found for the perceptions of service quality by different age groups.

The exploratory factor analysis based on the service quality gap resulted in a 7-factor solution which supports the multidimensional structure of the service quality concept as suggested by the modified ECOSERV model. However, it does not fully match the initially proposed structure. The identified dimensions of service quality are: "Empathy and responsiveness", "Local influence and appearance", "Reliability", "Learning", "Embeddedness in nature, and attractions", "Sustainable practices" and "Competence". The identified model was further validated with reliability and validity tests.

Lastly, the results obtained from the multivariate regression analysis suggest that the dimensions of service quality have an effect on the overall service quality, destination image and future behavioural intentions, although the statistical significance and size of the effects vary across the dimensions. Finally, the positive impact of destination image on future behavioural intentions is confirmed.

### **Originality of the research**

The originality of this research is best described by assessing its empirical, conceptual and applied contribution. In terms of conceptual contribution, the research adds to scientific thought on the concept of service quality, including by substantiating its universal importance and specificities. Through a synthesis of existing knowledge on ecotourism and service quality, the research verifies the importance of measuring service

quality in ecotourism and emphasizes the need to include the element of sustainability of the provided services in the analysis. A theoretical overview of destination image and future behavioural intentions is also presented, which offers a framework for exploring the relationship between service quality and destination image, between service quality and future behavioural intentions, and between destination image and future behavioural intentions. The thesis presents a systematic overview of relevant SERVQUAL research from 1988 to the present, as well as other models for measuring service quality. Lastly, the thesis makes a conceptual contribution by developing a modified ECOSERV model for measuring service quality in ecotourism.

The methodological and empirical scientific contribution of the thesis is reflected in the fact that this is the first measurement of service quality in the Republic of Croatia, carried out in all eight national parks using the modified ECOSERV model. The results of this research expand existing knowledge in the context of service quality in ecotourism in general, as well as in the context of conducting research in a new geographical area. In addition, a two-phase pilot study was conducted to strengthen the instrument used in the main study. A combination of univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistical methods was used to test the proposed conceptual model which also represents a methodological contribution of the research. As a result, key expectations, perceptions and gaps in service quality have been identified, as well as its dimensions in ecotourism. The applied methodology helps to better understand the impact of service quality dimensions on overall service quality, destination image and future behavioural intentions, as well as the influence destination image has on future behavioural intentions. The modified ECOSERV model has been identified as a valid and reliable instrument for measuring service quality in ecotourism services.

The thesis also provides insights into service quality in ecotourism which could have managerial implications. The insights concerning the key attributes and dimensions of service quality in ecotourism could help national park management identify and better target actions aimed at improving service quality. The confirmed relationship between service quality, destination image and future behavioural intentions might also provide a framework for developing and implementing comprehensive marketing strategies. Lastly, the modified ECOSERV model could be used to regularly analyse, compare and monitor service quality in ecotourism.

The thesis concludes with a discussion on the links to the results of previous research and addresses the limitations of the research. Finally, several avenues for future research are presented.

**Keywords** service quality, measurement, ecotourism, national parks, statistical analysis, SERVQUAL, ECOSERV

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## CLIMATE CHANGES AS DETERMINANTS IN SHAPING TOURISM SUPPLY – ATTITUDES OF MANAGEMENT

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### SUMMARY

#### **Purpose**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing global industries and plays a significant role in national and local economies. Global climate change, as well as sustainable development, especially from the point of view of research of beliefs and attitudes on climate change, is the current area of research by only a small number of scientists around the world, even though an expert group gathered at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in the middle of the second decade of the 20th century has confirmed "*with almost complete assurance that human activities are the dominant cause of global warming, leading to multiple manifestations of climate change*". and thus climate change is only the subject of academic research. Taking into account all other environmental problems, climate change has become the biggest challenge and threat to the survival of human civilization, with many consequences and a very wide influence on virtually every aspect of human life, and undoubtedly on tourism as an activity.

Between tourism and climate change there is a two-way relationship as tourism is largely dependent on the climate and is influenced by climate change that happens in real time. On the other hand it is estimated that tourism is responsible for at least 8 of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. which is why great efforts are being made at the global and national level in order to mitigate the consequences of climate change and to plan and take measures to prevent further negative consequences that might be irreversible in the future.

Tourism as a whole, especially transport related to arrivals and departures of tourists to destinations, and tourism accommodation *per se*, significantly contribute to global warming through greenhouse gas emissions and a significant carbon footprint of tourism. Given that the consequences of climate change lead, *inter alia*, to the increased risk of flooding and drought, melting glaciers, rising sea levels, loss of biodiversity, various human health threats and damage to all sectors of the economy, while at the same time having an extremely high contribution to tourism and the total gross domestic product (GDP) of national economies, any impact of climate change on tourism can have very important economic and development implications, especially in Croatia where tourism is the backbone of the economy.

Starting from the assumption of a two-way relationship between climate change and tourism, as well as the importance of knowing the beliefs and attitudes of managers in entire tourist accommodation industry as key persons in tourism management as decision-makers and key actors in implementation of environmental protection and implementation of development and business policies in the area of sustainable development which is inseparable from climate change impacts, the main objective of the research would be to examine and analyze the beliefs and attitudes about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation and climate changes as the determinants of tourism offer, as well as the differences between managers in different tourist accommodation facilities.

From the aforementioned, it is also the subject of scientific research that deals with analyzing, elaborating, researching and consistently determining the relevant features of tourist accommodation management beliefs and attitudes between climate change and tourism influence, as well as climate changes as the determinants of tourist offer. Purpose Knowledge of managers' attitudes and beliefs is extremely important in order to anticipate, plan and direct the use of mitigation measures and the prevention of negative impacts of climate change and the tourist accommodation industry, so that all subjects directly or indirectly linked to tourism can adapt in a suitable way to the new situation and minimize as far as possible the more negative consequences of climate change.

The scientific problem or the subject of this scientific research is related to three primary objects of scientific research that are linked to a logical entity: climate change, tourism and design of tourist offer in the Republic of Croatia, attitudes and beliefs of managers about the impact of climate change and tourism in Croatia, as well as on climate changes as the determinants of tourist offer.

In addition to the main goal, the research has also focused on several auxiliary/specific objectives that sought to determine whether certain characteristics of accommodation such as type of accommodation, type of guests, business orientation through wellness and SPA services, i.e. sports and fitness offer, accommodation locations in the coastal or continental counties, the seasonality of the business, as well as the possession of a clearly defined environmental policy, and an analysis of the influence of certain socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on the beliefs and attitudes of managers on climate change issues and the impact of climate change and tourist accommodation.

## **Methodology**

The theoretical part of the doctoral thesis was based on the available scientific and professional literature results that were collected and analyzed using the historical method. Although limited by scope, the introductory part provides an overview showing the degree of development of this problem. Historical method illustrates the historical development and interrelationship of tourism and climate change with an emphasis on recent data on causes and proportions of climate events, scenarios of changes in the future, all in the context of tourism impact. The historical method analyzes collected data on the impact of climate change on individual destinations in Europe and the world, and predictions of future changes, as well as data on the attitudes of the general population, especially the stakeholders in tourism, about the impact of climate change and tourism. By studying related research, the abstraction and concretization methods extracted from the multitude of data are those relevant to the research. By the method of analysis and synthesis, a whole is studied by studying the components and by combining some elements of the research. In this scientific study a combination of scientific methods, such as inductive and deductive methods, was used, with logical, methodological and scientific empirical approaches to specific knowledge. The transition from individual and special characteristics to general characteristics was done by using generalization and specialization methods. Determining the legality of a court or claim was made by using evidence and denial methods. The comparative method was used to compare certain properties. Statistical methods in the area of descriptive statistics and difference statistics, and selected multivariate analysis methods (conformational factor analysis) were used to describe certain properties and their comparison.

The survey was focused on 1084 facilities, representing the total population of all categorized facilities by type as hotels and apart-hotels, then tourist resorts and tourist apartments as well as camps, and marinas in the Republic of Croatia covered by the latest available List of categorized facilities on 7 March 2019 officially issued by the Croatian Ministry of Tourism.

For the purpose of determining the beliefs and attitudes on climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation, a questionnaire originally designed for this research was used. Out of the total number of questionnaires submitted, 283 questionnaires had been duly completed, representing 26.1% of respondents, including 4.60% of the members of the Management Board or the Supervisory Body, 46.65% of the Directors or Heads of the Facility or members of the Operational Management, 19% quality managers and 33.56% of middle management staff.

Data processing was performed using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet software. Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test analyzed the distribution of continuous numerical values and according to the obtained data corresponding non-parametric tests were applied. Categorical and nominal values are shown using corresponding frequencies and shares. Continuous values are shown using medians and interquartile ranges, and the differences between them are analyzed by Kruskal-Wallis's, that is post-hoc Mann-Whitney U test, and presented in Box and Whisker's plot in which shows median values, interquartile ranges, minimum and maximum values, and extreme values which differ from the medians by more than 1.5 interquartile ranges. Confirmatory factor analysis with

Varimax rotation was performed in which matrix and factor saturation were calculated for three factors (cognitive, behavioral and emotional domain) and for each factor the coefficient of the internal consistency of Cronbach alpha was satisfactory ( $> 0.700$ ).

### **Findings**

After the statistical analysis of the collected results it can be concluded that the main hypothesis of the survey was confirmed that managers in tourist accommodation facilities have established beliefs and attitudes about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation. When comparing the three components that are constituents of attitudes in accordance with the theory of the threefold structure of the stand, it has been shown that in the managers the most powerful and positively oriented was the behavioral component, then the cognitive and finally equally positively oriented conative component.

In the case of auxiliary hypotheses from the results obtained it can be concluded that all the auxiliary hypotheses of the research were confirmed. It has been established that there are significant differences in the attitudes of managers who manage different categories of tourist accommodation facilities for all 36 statements from the basic questionnaire according to which they expressed their degree of acceptance, i.e. their beliefs and attitudes. It was demonstrated that there is a statistically significant difference in all three components of the attitude about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation are of managers that manage different categories of tourist accommodation facilities.

There have been significant differences in the attitudes of managers managing tourist accommodation facilities of different categorization or different number of awarded stars in all the statements for which they expressed their position in all three components of the attitude.

There are significant differences in the attitude of managers who manage tourist accommodation facilities that have ecological facilities and a SPA/wellness offer, or fitness offer, in relation to managers in tourist accommodation facilities where there is no SPA/wellness offer or fitness content offers in all the statements for which they expressed their attitude in all three components of the attitude, except in the emotional component associated with the sense of fear experienced by the respondents when contemplating climate change, irrespective of the observed characteristic of the accommodation.

There have been significant differences in the attitudes of managers who manage tourist accommodation facilities that are open year-round in relation to managers in tourist accommodation facilities that are seasonal, in most of the statements they expressed their attitude about in all three components of the attitude. Statistically significant differences were observed in 18 of the 22 statements in the cognitive component of the attitude, in 3 of the 6 statements related to the emotional component of the attitude, and in 5 of the 8 claims related to the behavioral component of the attitude.

There are significant differences in beliefs and attitudes about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation, as well as about climate changes as determinants of the creating tourist offer between managers in tourist accommodation facilities given the type and manner of guest arrival or between managers in tourist accommodation facilities which are oriented towards accommodation of individual guests in relation to managers in tourist accommodation facilities that are family-oriented or oriented towards organized groups. The differences were observed in 11 of 22 statements in the cognitive component of the attitude, in 5 of the 6 statements in the emotional component of the attitude, and in 6 of the 8 statements in the behavioral component of the attitude.

There have been significant differences between the attitudes of managers who manage tourist accommodation facilities who have and those who do not have a clearly defined environmental and quality policy or environmental protection policy contained in any of the valid quality certificates in all the statements they have expressed their attitude about, in all three components of the attitude, except in the emotional component associated with the sense of fear experienced by the respondents when contemplating climate change.

There are significant differences in attitudes between managers in tourist accommodation facilities located in coastal or continental counties, in all three components all the statements except in the statement which claims that the national government should set national targets for increasing the use of renewable energy, such as wind energy or solar energy.

There are significant differences between attitudes about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation as well as about climate changes as the determinants of creating tourism offer among managers whose sphere of responsibility is quality policy in relation to managers who are focused on strategic management or in relation to managers that are part of the ownership structure, as there are also significant differences in the beliefs and attitudes between managers at the middle management level compared to managers in top management positions.

There have been significant differences in the beliefs and attitudes about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation, as well as about climate changes as the determinants of tourism offer, depending on certain sociodemographic characteristics of respondents, especially their gender, level of education, length of service in the tourism sector, membership in ecological NGOs or activism in ecological actions and initiatives.

Consequently, the beliefs and attitudes of managers in the tourist industry are the function of various characteristics of the accommodation facility, where stronger proecological attitudes and higher levels of ecological awareness about climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation, as well as climate changes as the determinants of tourism offer are shown by managers working in: in categorized tourist accommodation facilities of higher category (higher number of stars); categorized tourist accommodation facilities located in coastal counties; categorized tourist accommodation facilities that work all year round; categorized tourist

accommodation facilities that have a strong orientation towards the SPA/wellness offer and amenities; categorized tourist accommodation facilities that have a clearly defined written quality policy and environmental protection and categorized tourist accommodation facilities aimed at organized groups and family guests who come for holiday.

Also, stronger proecological attitudes and higher levels of ecological awareness of climate change and the interinfluence of climate change and tourist accommodation, as well as of climate changes as the determinants of creating tourist offer are shown by managers working in categorized tourist accommodation facilities in top management positions, by managers who have completed tertiary level of education, who are members of ecological NGOs and consider themselves activists, who are of female gender and those who have more years of work experience.

### **Originality of the research**

The results of this paper provide a series of insights that may be relevant for the development of sustainable practices in the tourism sector and in particular hotel industry in general, as they contribute to understanding of the attitudes of key decision-makers and can provide the basis for predicting their behavior in relation to the application of environmental protection measures against the negative impact of tourism which is unambiguous.

**Keywords** attitudes, beliefs, climate change, management, tourism, destinations

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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF HEALTH TOURISM TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURIST DESTINATION

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### SUMMARY

#### **Purpose**

The first major restriction for economic sustainability of Croatian tourism is its seasonality. If looking at the seasonality through the Gini coefficient in all aspects of accommodation, Croatia has the biggest seasonality in the Mediterranean countries. By determining the percentage of seasonality against Croatia's major competitors in hotels and similar accommodation units, then only Montenegro has larger percentage of dependence. The seasonality in period from 2013 to 2017 is not dropping but instead from June 1 to September 30 it brings very high 86% of yearly tourist revenue. Our competitors in the same period bring 43%(Malta), 51%(Spain), 59%(Cyprus) and 62%(Italy). The second major restriction of Croatian Tourism is huge disproportion between tourism revenue of Adriatic and Continental parts of the country. Even if the size percentage ratio is 56% versus 44% in favour of Continental part, if observed by the tourist accommodation revenue, the ratio is 95% versus 5% in favour of Adriatic part of Croatia. Further on, the availability of beds over 1 square km the ratio is 41.8 versus 3.5 beds in favour of Adriatic part. The restriction is connected with the rental model of development of low added value in Croatia, when growth of accommodation capacities in 6 years (2011-2016) is rising in favour of capacities of low added value 92% private accommodation took 82%, camps took 10% of total capacities while hotels took only 6%. All the mentioned restrictions are the cause for this research, how to decrease such a high seasonality which is not supporting economical sustainability of the tourist destination. This is the reason for decision to research the contribution of health tourism to economic sustainability of tourist destination. The principal purpose of this research is to point out the meaning and contribution of health tourism development in Croatia which as such is contributing to economic sustainability of the destination.

## **Methodology**

Empirical investigation has been conducted in two directions. First is based on analyzing and processing secondary information which is presenting one very important segment of economic sustainability, addressed through seasonal effect, benchmarking analysis, availability of health tourism in Croatia, and especially through analysis of five indicators of tourist intensity and their influence on economic sustainability of destination through example of 97 cities and regions of Adriatic(72) and Continental(25) Croatia. Six variables have been analysed which were divided into two groups. First group is made of health institutions and organizations in tourist destinations which are further divided into six subgroups according to the health tourism development in analysed destinations. Second group is made out of five variables of economic sustainability of tourist intensity and statistical analysis was made out of a sample of 97 tourist destinations in Croatia.

Second direction of investigation has been conducted through field research where questionnaire has been presented to 92 health tourism institutions in Croatia (from wellness hotels, special hospitals and Spa's to clinics and doctor's offices) of Adriatic and Continental part of the country. This served as a way to obtain primary information which have been processed through scientific method while explaining statistical methods and results.

Primary data has been collected by conducting exploratory, unexperimental, questionnaire style of research which was done by utilizing feedback from 92 health tourism organizations and institutions. The questions were shaped by example of Likert scale while the entire questionnaire has been put together by BSC (balance ScoreCard) method. The methods which were used for calculating the results: number of measurements ( $n$ ), arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), median ( $M$ ), sample testing (Man-Whitney test), distribution normality test (Komogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test), nonparametric methods: rank correlation (Kendall's Tau B Method; Spearman's rho method); nonparametric ANOVA (Kruskal Wallis test; Post-hoc analysis by Dunn).

## **Findings**

In order to accomplish the purpose and goals of scientific research in this dissertation answers are provided (research results) to several questions which came from set hypothesis:

- All analyzed factors which are referring to implementation of strategic regulation of tourism development of Republic of Croatia in health tourism institutions are contributing to economic sustainability of tourist destination, with detailed display of 52 factors and their influence on economic sustainability
- Internal key factors of development of health tourism (market orientation; processes and activities; learning and growth; and financial perspective) have effect on the implementation of strategy of tourism development of Republic of Croatia, as well as on the opinions about strategic orientation in health tourism institutions.



- Market orientation of health tourism institutions of Croatia is contributing the implementation of strategic development goals and economic sustainability of tourist destination. This contribution of market orientation would be even more significant if we would be to join the geographical clusters on regional and national level in order to achieve better market competitiveness.
- The perspective of learning and growth in health tourism institutions described in all six parts of this dissertation is contributing to implementation of strategic development goals of their establishments, thus contributing economic sustainability of tourist destination.
- With possibility of increasing the productivity on the level of competitiveness, high marks of all factors of financial perspective in health tourism institutions prove that financial perspective also contributes to implementation of strategic development goals of their establishments and institutions, thus contributing to economic sustainability of tourist destination.
- Analysis on perspective and stability of health tourism in Republic of Croatia shows the largest development restrictions of health tourism which can be seen in:
  - Marketing of health tourism on a national level
  - Inadequate legal regulation which does not allow the health tourism development
  - Inadequate measures of economic politics which are not supporting the health tourism development
  - Health tourism in Croatia is still not recognized as product with high development priority
  - Joining regional and national clusters in Republic of Croatia is still not contributing to better positioning of health tourism institutions in the market
- Perspective of health tourism development in Croatia shows maximum potential contribution of health tourism to economic sustainability of tourist destination. This potential contribution is primarily seen in:
  - Positive attitude that health tourism can secure better utilization of our hospitality capacities, year round income, elevated additional value of services and sustainable economic development of the country
  - Positive attitude that for health tourism development requires interdisciplinary specialist education and level of knowledge, lifelong learning systems which can be developed in Republic of Croatia
  - Key perspective that health tourism can make a positive impact on reducing seasonal dependency and thus contribute to sustainability of tourist destinations in Croatia
- The results of research, which are based on secondary information received from tourist destinations of Adriatic and Continental areas of Croatia, are also proving the primary scientific hypothesis (H0). For this reason the indicators of health tourism development in Croatian destinations have on the economic sustainability of tourism (97 destinations in Adriatic and Continental areas of Croatia) are researched. Results of statistical analysis of five different types of health tourism destinations (VAR1 from 0 to 5) are provided, after which is made analysis of all five indicators of economic sustainability of tourist destinations: VAR2 (ZTLG) – impact of tourism on local economy, VAR3 (TIR) – Percentage of tourist intensity, VAR4 (TPR) –

Percentage of tourist flow, VAR5 (TDR) – Percentage of tourist density and VAR6 (CTF) – Coefficient of tourism functionality. All these proven facts are connected with the seasonality and economic unsustainability. The variable of seasonality is the most important reference of this dissertation and as such, it has the biggest impact on the economic sustainability of tourism. Tourism seasonality in Croatia has the biggest impact in private accommodation sector, and health tourism, despite the enormous potential of reducing this issue still has very limited effect on total economic sustainability. In addition, the secondary research has shown that current health tourism capacities are not very competitive with the products and services they offer. It is very visible that reason for this is a lack of proper competition and competitiveness. From the analysis of the parameters of tourist intensity by the way of statistical method of correlation of rank it is reached the second part of conclusion pertaining the proof of set hypothesis, which together with the first part of primary field research completed each other by proving the primary and all secondary hypothesis

### **Originality of the research**

This research has its contribution in development of science in theoretical and practical sense. In theoretical part, scientific facts of the relevant area have been researched as well as all the relevant and available literature on the matter. Theoretical scientific facts are contributing to development of health tourism and sustainable development of touristic destination. Following this thought, this dissertation has proven the theoretical basis of health tourism and sustainable development; this is especially pertaining to overview of previous theoretical and empirical research connected with health tourism and economic sustainability of tourist destinations.

In practical part, the research has shown the results from received feedback of questionnaires. The most relevant 92 institutions and organizations of health tourism in Adriatic and Continental part of the country provided this feedback. The model of contribution of health tourism has been tested and based on 97 destinations of Adriatic(72) and Continental(25) Croatia towards the economic sustainability of tourism destination by the example of 5 indicators of economic sustainability. The originality of research is represented through the completion of its goals which are:

- development and explanation of model which is smart, inclusive and sustainable development of tourist destinations in Croatia which are basing their development on health tourism.
- Innovations which in Strategy 'Europe 2020' take central spot, and 'smart specialization' needs to make it possible for countries and regions to specialize in those activities in with they hold comparative advantage. For Croatia and croatian tourism the oportunity lies in development of health and wellness industry.
- The unsustainability of seasonal tourist concept development has been proven and factors which are influencing the seasonal dependence of croatian tourism have been explained.
- The possibilites of connecting health tourism into geographical clusters in order to facilitate sustainable and equal development have been established.

- The concept of health industry and health tourism as a part of sustainable development, which further enables economic development has been explained.
- Tourism has been identified as a phenomenon with strong innovation potential which was elaborated on example of health tourism. In addition, the health tourism development model which is necessary in order to successfully manage such tourist destination has been suggested.

**Keywords** health tourism, economic sustainability, tourist destination, seasonality

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