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**TOURISM  
IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

Tourism product as a factor of competitiveness of  
the Serbian economy and experiences of other countries



**THEMATIC  
PROCEEDINGS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF KRAGUJEVAC  
FACULTY OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT  
AND TOURISM IN VRNJAČKA BANJA**



# THE COMPLEXITY OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT AS A FACTOR IN THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MOUNTAIN DESTINATIONS IN SERBIA

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## Abstract

*In recent decades, tourism has an increasingly important role in economic and social development of many countries. With valorization of the mountains tourism potential, Serbia realized a number of objectives of economic and general social development. The number of destinations that offer tourism products in the tourism market is growing in order to intensify competition. The authors have paid special attention to the analysis of the current situation, based on which they will indicate the ability to create a complex product of the mountainous region of Serbia. Comparing the mountain resorts in the Region, the authors will try to point out the shortcomings of previous and future developments.*

Key words: *mountains, Serbia, competitiveness, tourism product, tourism*  
JEL classification: Z30

## Introduction

Mountain tourism has become one of the biggest forms of tourist movements at the end of 20th and early 21st century. Also, in terms of social and economic effects that have been achieved, this motif becomes the basis of the development. With many difficulties and problems that Serbia has encountered, it has managed to develop mountain tourism, more or less successfully, depending on the period of its socio-economic development.

Serbian mountainous area has numerous and various natural and anthropogenic resources, which could significantly contribute to the

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economic development of the country and improve its reputation in the international community. So far, Serbia has failed to achieve any significant results in terms of development of mountain tourism and to position itself successfully in the regional and international tourism market.

If we analyze mountain resorts in the neighboring countries and the Region, we see that, compared to Serbia, they have, achieved much better tourism income and much better results in their tourism development in the recent years, despite significantly smaller number of tourism potentials. Based on that, Serbia should carry out the repositioning of its current competitive position in the tourism market as soon as possible. It is necessary for Serbia to form a complex tourism product in order to position its mountain resorts on the international market - the so-called "integrated product" - that is characterized by a complex nature. The integral product is composed of a large number of different components that have a functional role in the material and non-material elements (Koutoulas, 2004). Its components complement each other, thereby providing the total value of the tourism product.

In order to make visiting of the mountain centers in Serbia bigger and more meaningful, it is essential to enrich the mountain tourism product with activities in a preserved natural environment, offering a larger number of ski tracks, more adequate infrastructure and food specialties from a certain region, a variety of offer for rest and recreation, facilities suitable for extreme sports, spas, visits to the spa resorts in the foothills of the mountains, events and visiting near-by anthropogenic tourism sights. Such a tourism product in the Serbian mountain centers could be the basis for the future tourism development of mountain centers. According to the resource base, which includes mountain resorts, the aim of the paper is to point out the possibility of shaping tourism contents and richer tourism product. Based on the above mentioned and such a tourism product, Serbia, as a mountainous country, could position itself at the European market of mountain tourism.

### **The concept of a tourism product**

The very concept of the product could be defined as everything offered on the market and everything that meets the needs of the consumers (Popesku, 2011). This definition is widely held, but there are big differences in terms of the essence of this concept in tourism. The tourism

product can be defined as a set of elements (the accommodation, the transport, attractions, events, and others), which are complementary and which are to provide the tourists an experience in the destination. This definition raises the issue of coordination between content and local companies that provide individual elements of the tourism product (Andergassen et al., 2013).

The first authors who considered that the components of the tourism product should be defined from the perspective of tourists were Middleton & Clarke (2001). The reason is that tourists feel that the tourism product represents a total experience that meets the expectations of tourists. Every tourist has certain expectations, and after returning - memories. Based on this, a tourism product can be viewed from two aspects, as:

- the overall travel experience from the moment of departure until the moment of return.
- an experience of the destination as a whole that offers an integrated experience and product composed of products and resources.

According to Popesku (2011), it is necessary to point out the elements that destinations use for creating an integrated tourism product which is a combination of certain elements:

- the appeal of a destination,
- the conditions of staying and services offered at a destination, and
- the accessibility of the destination.

So, the integrated tourism product as a mixture of such elements is a joint act that affects the satisfying the tourists needs. As such, the integral product needs to be looked into deeper in order to provide adequate requirements for tourists during their stay in a particular destination. Such tourism products are related to tourism centers and destinations. The final objective of the integrated product is the economic benefit from the creation and placement of a unified product, which is based on consumer satisfaction (Popović, 2015).

Manenti and Minghetti say that moving the focus from the destination as a tourism place towards the destination as a tourism product – or as a system of products - depends on an observation of directly or indirectly involved participants. They underline the necessity of a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of the concept of a

tourism destination, and further to the processes of analysis, planning, management and destination development control. Given that tourism is being developed everywhere in the world today, it is normal that competition occurs between certain countries, i.e. tourism destinations. The competitiveness of a tourism destination is based on the fact that the experience, acquired by tourists in a destination, is a fundamental product in tourism. The competitiveness of a tourism destination is closely linked with their comparative advantages in the tourism market. Comparative advantages are based on a huge amount of factors of production (the infrastructure, natural and anthropogenic resources, money, knowledge, etc.). If we perceive a destination in terms of tourism development, it is necessary to look at the historical and cultural resources as a special category of comparative advantages, including here the infrastructure, and, we would also add the superstructure (Ritch & Crouch, 2003).

Special attention should be perceived from a comparative and competitive advantage of a tourism destination. Comparative advantage refers to the available resources, and the competitive advantage refers to the ability of a destination that during a long period of time uses their resources efficiently and effectively to attract tourists and increase the prosperity and general welfare of the entire destination.

Competitive abilities show the level of its socio-economic development. The goal of every tourism movement is the accomplishment of the desired and expected experience and the experience for every tourist. Starting from this definition, the creation of an integrated tourism product is the basis of competitiveness of tourism destinations. Innovative products, which would be based on the specific needs of the tourism market segments and provide a unique tourism experience, can significantly increase the competitiveness of the destination. Lately, innovative tourism products have been becoming more important as a concept of a sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations. A sustainable competitiveness means, first and foremost, the protection of the environment, the absence of which may significantly jeopardize the survival of a particular destination on the tourism market. It requires a balance between tourism development and environmental protection. The degree of preservation of the environment is one of the key elements of the tourist experience.

In addition to the integrated and innovative tourism product, a great number of other products is also formed in the tourism market out of

which the competitiveness index of travel and tourism can be singled out. This index was developed by the World Product (World Economic Forum). It is composed of three sub-indices:

1. the sub-index of regional framework of tourism and travel - these are the elements related to politics and under the influence of the government,
2. the sub-index of business environment and the infrastructure of tourism and travel - elements of infrastructure and business environment being included and
3. the sub-index of human, cultural and natural resources.

Each of these sub-indices contains specific competitors, which are a series of individual products and the data which are obtained by various international organizations and experts (Blanke & Chiesa, 2011). Another interesting index representing the competitiveness of the tourism market in the context of tourism destinations is TTC index. This index is the only model which is now used in practice for measuring competitiveness and as such is a good basis for the comparison between the competitiveness of many countries in the world. Our country was not ranked in this index before 2008 (Ubavić, 2015).

Table 1: *TTCI index of competitiveness of Serbia in global tourism*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>The index value</b>	3.76	3.71	3.85	3.78	3.34
<b>The World ranking</b>	78/130	88/133	82/140	95/141	
Europe ranking	37/42	38/42	38/42	40/42	35/37

Source: *The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2008/2009/2011/2013/2015*

Based on Table 1, we can see that the index value varies greatly and that it was the lowest in 2015, when our country was ranked as the 95th in the world (out of 141 surveyed countries) and 35th in Europe (out of 37 surveyed countries).

According to the World Tourism Organization, Serbia had the best grades for the health care approach (6.00); terrorism and domestic violence safety (5.5); the price competitiveness (4.6) and for the development of information technology (4.4). The lowest marks were given for communications in air traffic (2.1), the availability of natural resources

and development of tourism activities in the open air (1.9) and the availability of cultural goods and commercial routes (1.6). The grade for prioritization of travel and tourism (3.8) shows the extent to which the Government of Serbia is actively promoting and governing the development of tourism (Ubavić, 2015)

Based on all of the given indicators and all the mentioned facts, Serbia should use the indices in the assessment of its competitive position in the regional and international tourism market. In addition to that, our country should enrich its tourism products and create new and innovative tourism products that will help in better and higher positioning out on the international tourism market.

### **The analysis of the complexity of tourism products of the mountains of Serbia**

The basis of the tourism product of mountain tourism is its natural and anthropogenic tourism values. It is possible to develop several different types of tourism on our mountains. We should emphasize the fact that Serbia now has only comparative advantages in tourism, because it has a non-uniform structure of tourism. It is close to the traditional and new tourism markets and has a long history and a general recognition, preserved natural resources, adequately good communication and it has great human potential. It is necessary to ensure proper representation of Serbia as a tourism destination, and its comparative advantages should be used for the improvement of the following types of tourism developments:

- *Tourism of high mountains* - This is the basis for future international offers of Serbia. Mountains with peaks over 2,000m above the sea level have aesthetic, interesting and landscape features of a tourism attraction. This type of tourism can be developed both for the domestic and the foreign, winter, summer, recreational, stationed, ecological, educational, or scientific tourism. The biggest advantage of the high mountain areas is winter and sports and recreational tourism, which is manifested through sports and recreational activities such as skiing and other forms of recreation during winter.
- *Tourism of low and medium mountains* - (with peaks from 1,000 to 2,000m) it characterizes areas around major urban centers. This type of tourism, in contrast to the high mountain one, has limited winter tourism. However, there is a great potential for developing summer, stationed, excursion, transit, environmental, educational, air and

recreational tourism. This type of tourism is most commonly aimed at local tourists.

- *Water-Based Tourism* - that is tourism on rivers, natural and artificial lakes and canals of Serbia. For the development of tourism on water, the biggest attraction are natural and anthropogenic values. Our rivers are suitable for development of nautical, hunting and fishing, sports and recreational, environmental, events, and excursion tourism.
- *Transit tourism* - is linked to the main traffic routes of our country. This type of tourism is typical for the summer season, while it is limited in winter. Transit tourism implies building of appropriate tourism facilities along the corridor 10, arms B and C, and other main roads.
- *City tourism* – This is one of the leading forms of tourism in our country. It does not have seasonal character and it is related to the short tourist stays. Larger urban centers in Serbia, such as Belgrade, Novi Sad, Nis, Subotica, or Kragujevac should be developing the following tourism forms: business, congresses, events, excursion, cultural and recreational and other forms of tourism.
- *Spa tourism* - Besides health and recreation, it includes more market segments. It is known for its summer season and domestic tourists. Considering the current development and the achieved level of development of this type of tourism in Serbia, the question of strategic basis is posed for the further development of this type of tourism movement. The tendency of its further development should be directed in several directions: qualitative-quantitative improvement of accommodating conditions, adequate prices, the development of appropriate content (especially in sports, cultural and events tourism) modernizing and specializing healthcare services, favoring congress tourism, the organization of seminars, symposia and others.
- • *Rural tourism* - is typical for preserved, authentic rural settings. In Serbia, this type of tourism is stagnating due to the large outflow of rural population to major urban centers. The development of rural tourism could influence the increase of the economic effect of profit making in tourism as well as prevention of the outflow of population from the villages (Ahmetović - Tomka, 1996). This form of tourism can occur in correlation with the mountain and spa tourism. Tourism in the country can be considered as a significant opportunity of demographic and economic revitalization of rural settlements in Serbia. Developing this form of motif movement would bring about much higher economic effects in rural areas (selling of agricultural

products). On the other hand, the infrastructure in rural areas would be improved.

Of all these tourism types in the further development of tourism in Serbia, the emphasis will be placed on the mountain, spas, transit and other trends, the development of complementary activities and tourism related facilities (forestry, water management, healthy and safe food, etc.).

Tourism products of mountain resorts have been developed only recently. In the mountainous areas of Serbia, there are two separate tourism seasons. Those are summer and winter. Summer holiday implies the activities such as hiking, walking, outdoor activities, horseback riding, mountain biking, paragliding sun and like (swimming and sunbathing), picking herbs, picking mushrooms, etc. The primary motivation for such a holiday is fresh and clean air, and as a secondary motif there is enjoying the gastronomic products as well as natural and cultural attractions of some mountain destinations. However, during the summer months there is less concentration of movement of tourists compared to the winter season.

Winter holiday activities usually imply alpine skiing, cross-country and telemark skiing, snowboarding and sledging. During winter holidays in the mountains, on average, tourists spend more than during summer holidays. The drastic difference between the two seasons is visible especially in Serbia because most tourists during summer months decide on a seaside holiday. The primary motive for winter tourism is an active holiday, skiing and related activities, while the secondary motives are entertaining, gastronomy, shopping and nightlife.

Main tourists in Serbia are local skiers and snowboarders, families with children, active individuals (under 45 years of age), and younger population (18-25 years of age). In addition to them, the winter period is dominated by tourists from urban areas, higher purchasing power tourists, experienced skiers, while in some mountains beginners in skiing are typical (in Zlatibor, Divčibare, Golija). Mountain tourism centers which have now developed to be the serious tourism centers of Serbia are, firstly Kopaonik, Zlatibor, Stara Planina, and lately the mountain center of Divčibare has become popular, as well as Golija and Vlasina.

Starting from the actual and assumed trends of international tourism demand, in order to compete on the international market, Serbia can offer: Belgrade on the Danube, Central Kopaonik, Novi Sad with Fruska Gora,

Sar planina, the transit route Novi Sad - Niš, Maljen with Divčibare, Tara - Zlatibor - Zlatar, Stara planina with Babin zub. Its offer in the domestic market place will be continued and directed to spas, with a growing share of mountains, villages and areas of natural and cultural heritage (Popesku, 2002).

*Kopaonik* is an example of a good practice in terms of quality and structure of the tourism product. One of the most visited mountain resorts in Serbia offers a large number of tourism products. The focus of the tourism development of Kopaonik represents a favorable tourist-geographic position, a favorable traffic situation, the richness of the site attraction for tourists, the proximity to the emission centers, attractiveness of the motives, favorable natural value, the number of endemic and relict species of plants, proximity of thermal springs, complementarities of cultural motives, heterogeneous environment, modern accommodation facilities, wealth and quality of ski terrain and accompanying content, developed basic and telecommunications networks and the Internet, the hospitality of the citizens of Kopaonik, a growing range of additional features, the wealth of rural areas, gastronomy and centuries-old tradition, ecologically preserved Kopaonik National Park and others. The main tourism movement in Kopaonik is based on the development of:

- • *Mountain tourism*. This is a form of tourism which has a real tourism value. It is primarily manifested through geomorphological, climatic and biogeographical natural values, phenomena and processes. For this type of tourism, Kopaonik Resort offers the most diverse possibilities. In the first place, there are alpine ski fields for cross-country skiing of highest category. Mountain tourism on Kopaonik can be divided into summer and winter seasons. During the winter season, tourists have the opportunity to practice snow sports, snowboarding, alpine and cross-country skiing, sledge races and others. In order to make the stay on the mountain more interesting, tourism organizations organize competitions and different day and night events. In the case of poor visit during summer months, a variety of activities can be offered, such as fishing in the rivers, horseback riding, practicing different sports on the sports fields, picking herbs, mushrooms and other activities.
- *Sports and recreational tourism*. Based on natural factors, it can be said that Kopaonik has developed this type of tourism as well. Since ancient times, this region offered the opportunities for the development of recreation. Particularly noteworthy is the area around Ravni Kopaonik, which provides the greatest number of opportunities

for the development of sport and recreation. The terrain, water, climate, altitude, flora and fauna provide a quiet place in the beautiful setting of rich green areas, mountain springs, clean air even during summer months.

- *Rural tourism*. For visitors coming from urban areas, this is a form of the oldest and most traditional way of spending a holiday. This type of tourism has seen an increasing recognition in recent years. It can be said that the foothills of Kopaonik are made by a large number of rural villages, which have favorable conditions for the development of tourism in all rural households located in mountainous areas and the foothills. A significant advantage of rural settlements of Kopaonik is preserved nature, unpolluted environment, low population density, folklore heritage and rich cultural heritage. Although it has facilities for the development of rural tourism, we have to note that this type of tourism is at its very beginnings. If they are to correlate with mountain sports and recreational tourism, rural tourism could have and has great benefits for the creation of special tourism attractions. Healthy organic food, unpolluted environment, and clean drinking water are all the basic values of the rural area of Kopaonik.
- *Excursion tourism*. This is a form of tourism implying short stays which underwent a complete expansion in recent years. Tours are conducted mainly in the countryside, and usually take one day where tourists come down to visit certain sites, such as Krčmar vode - Marine vode - Metode with a geyser, or the monastery tour of Gradac - Stara Pavlica - Nova Pavlica - Petrova Crkva.
- *Transit tourism*. The unorganized tourism industry along the Ibar highway, as well as poor offer in the surrounding area act as a proper support to tourism development on Kopaonik. An increasing number of tourists on the way back from the coast rounds off their vacation with a few days of staying in Kopaonik.
- *Conference Tourism*. Kopaonik has a long tradition in hosting seminars and conferences. Some of the most important are: Seminar of Lawyers of Serbia, Serbian Informatics Community, Sports Days of Serbian Road Workers and others. Overall, tourism with shorter retention is currently booming mainly due to the use of off-season dates which positively affects the extension of the tourism season on Kopaonik.
- *Health and wellness tourism*. Being the location of several spas at its foothill (e.g. Jošanička, Kuršumlijska, Lukovska), this mountain offers opportunities and balneological service. Although now stagnating, these spas would be included in the offer together with mountain

center Kopaonik and connected with sports-recreational tourism, which would lead to the improvement of the tourism offer of the mountain and bring an additional content.

*Zlatibor.* Tradition and continuous development have taken this mountain to a very important place in the mountain tourism in Serbia. Favourable climate and geomorphological characteristics are the primary resources, which basically determine mountainous-sports and recreation function of the mountains which are the foundation of tourism development. The focus of tourism development on Zlatibor is the beauty of nature and the diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna, the suitability of climatic elements, the wealth of anthropogenic values and attractive sites for tourists, the development of Čajetina Municipality and the initiation of tourism development strategy of Zlatibor Mountain, adequate infrastructure, the transit position, the attractive destination, a suitable tourism and geographical location and others. The current offer of this mountain includes the following types of tourism:

- • *Sports and recreational tourism.* This type of tourism is widespread especially at the mountain peak of Tornik (the six-seat cable car and artificial snow cannons), and on the slopes of Obudojevica located at the center of the resort (few tracks and several smaller ski lifts). The mountain has adequate natural prerequisites, which provide suitable environment for sports activities. The mountain offers sports and recreational facilities that include indoor swimming pools, courts for minor and major sports, tennis courts, jogging trails, viewpoints and other facilities.
- • *Health tourism.* Due to the convenience of the climatic elements characteristic of this mountain, Zlatibor is declared to be an air spa. The influence of altitude, clean air, healthy and drinking cold water, abundance of greenery and silence are favorable for overworked people with minor illnesses, as well as for the preparation of the athletes, body strengthening, improving fitness (stamina) and form. Because of its authenticity, Zlatibor is an excellent place for rest, refreshment and sunbathing for people of all ages. The mountain provides an improvement in the blood count, cures asthma diseases, and normalizes blood pressure. In its vicinity there is Čigota Rehabilitation Center, which offers different medical services, including the one for treating obesity.
- • *Event tourism.* Tourism events of this area are typical for the summer season, and there are some others that are organized during the winter season in January and February. The most famous events

are: Film Festival in Drvengrad, Pršutijada in the village of Mačkat, Trumpet Festival, Hunter's Parliament (Wolf chase), Fruit brandy Fair in the village of Šljivovica and many others.

- • *Hunting tourism*. This form of tourism also makes a part of Zlatibor tourism offer. It gives the possibility to combine sports and recreational tourism with hunting tourism. In this region, there are numerous habitats of wolves, wild boars, foxes, pheasants, and other game.
- • *Wellness Tourism*. It is organised within the hotel complexes, which provide possibilities of using various spa centers. This type of tourism is particularly cherished in European countries and it has only recently been introduced into Serbia.
- • *Rural and ethno tourism*. It is well-developed in one of the first ethno villages in the region - Sirogojno, in Mečavnik (the location of Emir Kusturica's "Drvengrad"), and the rural village of Šljivovica (known for its variety of gastronomic products and different kinds of brandies and other home-made products).

Another mountain resort that gained on its popularity in the last ten years is *Stara Planina* which maintains its focus of the development in the preservation of nature, the beauty of natural landscapes, ancient archaeological sites, indigenous cultural values, the vicinity of the airports in Sofia and Niš, initiative and financial support of the Government of Serbia and other. The types of tourism represented in Stara Planina are:

- *Winter-sports and recreation*. The offer of this mountain is especially based around the mountain peak of Babin Zub, which provides the greatest opportunities for the development of sport and recreation. The tourism on this mountain is of a seasonal character.
- *Medical tourism*. Medical tourism in Stara Planina can be linked to the thermal mineral springs located on the mountain slopes. Revenues generated from this type of tourism movements are not insignificant and that is why this kind of movement should be preserved. Just as Zlatibor, Stara Planina provides opportunities for treatment of minor illnesses such as blood pressure, blood counts, treatment of nerves and others.
- *Field trips and excursion tourism*. This form of tourism is used in the form of pupils excursions and one-day trips. This movement has advantages in terms of proximity to the main road which runs near by (Corridor 10). The quality of connection of the excursion sites with the emission centers and major roads would allow the passers-by short

stays, and retention, and citizens from neighboring industrial centers a weekend or day trips.

Based on all above mentioned, we can say that the mountains of Serbia have a long tradition in tourism upgrading, which is reflected in their natural and anthropogenic tourism values. However, we must take into account the tourists' trend of going to the mountain resorts not only for practicing winter sports, but also for rehabilitation, relaxation, entertainment and other. The basis for the further development of mountain resorts in Serbia should be based on the establishment of an integrated tourism product and a complementary connection of multiple forms of tourism, such as sports and recreational tourism with spa, rural, medical treatment, health, excursion, events and other above mentioned aspects of the movement. In order to accomplish a better economic effect and achieve appropriate competitive position in the tourism market, the holders of tourism development of Serbian mountain resorts must find a way to refine the existing products with adequate facilities and thus create specific products that will influence the satisfaction of various needs of tourists.

### **Basic characteristics of tourism products of the mountains in the region**

The most competitive tourism products for the mountainous area of Serbia are surely Bulgaria and Slovenia, which using their existing natural resources manage to include innovation in their offer, and furthermore creativity and track trends in the development of tourism, providing tourists with an overall experience during their stay.

On the territory of Bulgaria, there is the mountain range of Rila as a specific competitor, especially to the mountainous area of Stara Planina. Rila is located in the eastern part of Bulgaria. It is known for its ski resort Borovets, located in its northwest part and which is one of the oldest, best and most prestigious ski resorts in Bulgaria and Europe. There are fifteen tracks located at an altitude of 2,000m to 2,750m. The tracks are adapted to skiers of different proficiency. Since the accommodation facilities are located at the foot of the mountain at 1,300 meters above sea level, the tracks are entered from the gondola and ski-lifts. The capacity of the tracks is 8,150 skiers per hour. The access to the mountain is excellent. The distance to the Sofia airport is 77.9km, while the one to the Niš airport is 348.9km.

Based on the presented potential and the level of completeness, with the volume of equipment and exploitation, Rila is at this point a serious competitive tourism center for Serbia.

Another competing mountain range is located in the so-called Julian Alps in Slovenia with Triglav as its highest peak (2,864m). This mountain range has a long and rich tradition. It is located on the border with Italy and a part of it belongs to Italy. It is composed of a dozen of over 2,000m high peaks, which are also the most interesting for experienced skiers and rich winter tourism season. In addition to the ski tracks, it provides the possibility of other various types of content and a complete active tourism offer throughout a holiday. The tracks could take over 6,000 skiers per hour. The access to the mountain centers is excellent.

Based on the above stated, we conclude that the Slovenian Alps represent a strong competitive destination to mountain resorts of Serbia, as well as Rila in Bulgaria. The mountain centers of Rila and the Julian Alps are the primary mountains which, from rural and deprived communities, have become the destinations that attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists. With the analysis of the mountains, we were able to integrate sport, recreational and health tourism.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the fact that mountain tourism has become an important economic activity in practice in the economies of many developed countries, there are completely understandable efforts of some economically underdeveloped countries to become actively involved in mountain tourism development. In this regard, the efforts being made by our country should be considered.

Today mountain resorts in Serbia could be said to possess a diverse tourism offer; that they are located near large emitting tourism centers, as well as new and traditional tourism markets, which have a long and generally recognizable preservation of natural resources, relatively good communication and great human potential.

As a country with significant and diverse tourism potentials located in mountain resorts, Serbia has a realistic chance to use its comparative advantages and in due course impose itself as one of the leaders in the development of mountain tourism in the Region. For achieving this

objective, it is necessary that the creators and bearers of the development of mountain tourism in Serbia eliminate or reduce the effects of some negative factors affecting its tourism offer. One of the most important steps on this road is for Serbia to become a full member of the European Union, which would be an important recommendation in the provision of quality services and ensuring the protection and safety of tourists during their stay in the mountainous areas of Serbia.

The wealth of natural and anthropogenic tourism values of mountains in Serbia have managed to form an integrated tourism product that meets the needs of tourists who want to learn about a new culture, meet new places and spend an active holiday. Adequate marketing and advertising should provide detailed descriptions and explanations about the desired destination. Offer holders of the mountain areas are faced with great challenges, because on the one hand, their target group of tourists and skiers who demand an active vacation with the use of appropriate ski tracks for alpine and cross-country skiing, while, on the other hand, modern tourists in search for relaxation and recreation are looking for a balance of body and mind. It is therefore necessary that one has a close insight into all tourism products provided in the mountain areas, and then enrich the tourism facilities and add innovative products that would involve the inclusion of additional facilities such as spa and wellness centers, cultural tourism offer, excursions and culinary content.

Such enrichment in the facilities of mountain areas would enable the approaching to European tourism market, as well as to international tourism market, where a large number of competitors is significantly represented. In this way, the product of mountain areas of Serbia would unite all activities for a quality tourism experience, as well as innovations in broadening the traditional frameworks of formation of offer and product creation from the perspective of a tourist, who is always eager for new experiences.

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