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TOURISM IN FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Spa Tourism in Serbia and Experiences of Other Countries



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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS BASIS OF SERBIAN SPA TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM MARKET

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Abstract

In extremely competitive conditions of tourism market, where everything is subordinate to the requirements of tourism demand, entrepreneurship plays the key role, being a primary source of ideas, innovations and creativity. The subject of this paper refers to the analysis of the situation in Serbian spa tourism. Main characteristic of spa tourism in Serbia is domination of domestic visitors, while foreigners make up only 16% of visitor turnover. This points to the conclusion that Serbian spas are not competitive in international market. Main goal of the paper is to highlight the significance of entrepreneurial activities in creation of innovative health-tourism product in Serbian spas, as in already known spa practices from the region. Significant contribution of the paper will reflect in guidelines towards relevant state institutions that can significantly improve development of entrepreneurship in Serbian spa tourism in order to achieve higher competitiveness in international tourism market.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, innovation, spa tourism, Europe, Serbia*

Introduction

Extreme growth of tourism activities in the past decades clearly defines tourism as the most significant economic and social phenomenon. Number of international tourists shows a growth from 25.3 million in 1950 to incredible 1,184 million in 2015 (UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer 2016). Such development of international tourism evolved in constant growth of tourism role in overall economic development of most

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countries over the world (Petrović & Milićević, 2015). Tourism became a global phenomenon of 21st century. However, tourism market is characterized by extreme glut. In tourism, continuous innovation of tourism offer is required because the development of the world economy, as well as the tourism development happens in a very turbulent environment (Krstić et al., 2015), and because tourists today increasingly strive for new tourism products, new destinations, new adventures and experiences. New experiences become a main motive for a decision on tourism travel.

Entrepreneurship is a crucial factor in the increase of a company's competitiveness in tourism and includes numerous elements such as creativity, innovations, uncertainty, risk taking, managerial skills, etc. (Hjalager, 2010). The basis of entrepreneurship is innovation. Spa centers, which want to survive in extremely turbulent tourism market, need to constantly keep pace with changes in the environment and, accordingly, innovate tourism products, services and business processes. Spa tourism, in initial phase of its development, was primarily related to the use of thermo-mineral waters, and many European spas were developed on this basis (Jovičić, 2008). During evolvement process, spa tourism expanded its offer with wellness, which included Eastern therapies (holistic concept), as well as sports and recreation, and culture and entertainment offer, meaning there was a transfer from curative to prevention, i.e. health promotion (Scopel, 2011). European spas that accepted such tendency and innovated their offer with additional services have made rapid progress in the market, and that primarily refers to traditionally competitive countries such as France, Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria, and Italy.

Entrepreneurship in tourism

Entrepreneurship is one of the most rapidly growing fields in economy, management, finances, as well as in numerous other fields. It is market's driving force (Mises, 1949). Entrepreneurship is an activity that includes discovery, revision and use of chances to introduce a new product or service, method, market and raw materials, organizing potential that didn't exist before (Shane, 2003).

Basis of entrepreneurship in field of tourism is represented by small and medium companies. Entrepreneurial processes also take place in bigger companies that introduce innovative products and processes in order to improve the offer and become prominent in the market in conditions of

uncertainty and strong competition. Entrepreneurs in tourism actively monitor the changes in environment in order to observe newly emerged chances on time and use them for competitiveness increase through the creation of innovative solutions. Those changes in the environment are relatively frequent and they can be related to general economic conditions, contemporary trends in tourism market and consumers' preferences, political stability, infrastructure, etc. (Weiermair, 2001). The biggest obstacle for the development of entrepreneurship in tourism is limited access to information, mostly insufficiently qualified workforce, expressed seasonal character of business, unpredictability of future developments, as well as financial weakness of small and medium companies (Milićević & Milovanović, 2012).

Entrepreneurship is best reflected in fields that offer the most innovative possibilities and chances. Big tourism companies are much faster in implementation of new ideas, by which they achieve comparative advantage. Smaller companies follow them only after they are convinced that investments or changes are feasible. By its nature, tourism sector makes it easier for companies to observe what others do (Radosavljević & Borisavljević, 2011). Innovation is, alongside skills, investments and enterprise, a major initiator of productivity in economy (Pivčević et al., 2012).

Innovations in tourism can be divided into the following (Hjalager, 2010):

- innovations on products,
- innovations on business processes,
- innovations in the field of information management,
- innovations in the field of management,
- institutional innovations.

There are numerous examples of innovations in tourism, such as organized travels, charter transport, low-cost airlines, franchising, time-sharing, all-inclusive services, electronic reservation systems, wellness tourism, "green hotels", etc.

Spa tourism offers an opportunity for unique and specialized business undertakings. As standard of living is growing, health tourism gains in significance, particularly in highly developed countries. In today's contemporary world, health has become precious. To feel and look healthy represents a true privilege in the time in which we live rapidly and experience stress on daily basis (Milićević, 2015). Entrepreneurs in spa

tourism can significantly contribute to economic growth, increase of local population employment, prolongation of tourism season, greater usage of accommodation facilities, development of complete spa destination through development of tourism infrastructure and superstructure. By using local contacts and information, they can create an integrated health tourism product in accordance with visitors' requirements. For example, they can combine wellness programs with active holidays in nature or health treatments with visit to cultural and historic sites.

Spa tourism in Europe

Tourism significantly contributes to economic, social and cultural development of Europe (Gligorijević & Petrović, 2009) as well as development of transition countries (Zdravković & Petrović, 2013). Europe disposes with a great number of widespread spas with diverse contents and special programs with different length and market targets. The concept of spa tourism is different from region to region, from country to country. In Western Europe, accent is on prevention, mental and physical health, spending time in thermal spas and wellness hotels. Opposed to this, in Central and Eastern Europe, the emphasis is on curative and physical health, i.e. conventional treatments prevail. In Southern Europe, there are treatments based on sea water (thalasso therapy) and tourism based on sea coast and sunlight, in combination with healthy food based on olive oil, fish, fruit and vegetables. Northern Europe bases spa tourism on physical activity in nature (fjords, lakes, forests). For example, in Scandinavia, great attention is paid to Nordic walking, skiing, swimming in the lakes, even during the winter (Smith & Puczko, 2009).

Tourism development trend in the part relating to people's health in Europe ranges from classic thermalism to contemporary notion of health tourism, which in addition to medical component (prevention, curative, rehabilitation), includes other components as well (wellness, sport, recreation, entertainment, healthy food, etc.) which can attract not only an ill man whose treatment/rehabilitation and stay is paid by the state through health insurance system, but also a healthy man, who is aware of the fact that he himself must finance his vacation in spa and climate places, i.e. health tourism destinations, for the sake of his own health and condition (Hrabovski Tomić, 2006).

In order to meet the requirements of contemporary tourists and survive in the competitive market, European spas continuously introduce innovative products and services. They offer an integral tourism product of exceptionally dynamic growth, which includes diverse offer of health tourism, wellness, medicine, beauty programs, fitness etc., in combination with quality accommodation, gastro offer, entertainment, cultural, and other activities that make a spa stay complete. Thus, spas are no longer only health resorts with a prominent philosophy of hospitalized services, but modern spa centers in which healthy people come as well, with the motive of preventive care for their health (Tabbachi, 2008).

Examples of spa practice in region

Further in this paper, we will present spa tourism in particular European countries, which are traditionally known spa destinations. This analysis shows the examples of good practice, which spa tourism in Serbia should look up to.

Natural health resorts of Slovenia. Slovenia disposes with 87 thermal springs and in relation to state size it can be classified among “thermally developed” countries. Most springs are meant for health tourism activities. Development and affirmation of 15 verified Slovenian health resorts was enabled by wealth of intact natural beauties of Slovenia. The most significant are thermal waters of diverse characteristics and temperature (from 32°C to 73°C) and mineral water; they are followed by sea water and brine, organic and inorganic peloids, as well as sea, Pannonian and pre-alpine high mountain microclimate. In the offer of 15 spa centers there are not only balneotherapy and physio-therapeutic services, but also other types of contemporary therapies based on competitiveness and education. The most contemporary offer in well-being products field is developed, as well as new programs for health preservation and illness prevention (Land of health Slovenia, 2015). Due to the rich tourism offer, these spas are visited by different clients, from children to very old people: rich offer of open and closed pools is primarily meant for children and the young, wellness offer for guests aged 30 and older, wider and general offer of recreation activities in addition to spa curative treatments is aimed for older clients. All hotels in spas have: one covered pool minimum and one open pool minimum, one fitness center at least, saunas and beauty centers, congress hall with accompanying equipment, professional staff for the animation of children. Diverse offer of sport and recreation is another characteristic of spas in

Slovenia (golf, minigolf, closed and open tennis courts, bowling allies, bocce, trim trails, equestrian sports, riding, bicycling, skiing, boat riding, hunting, fishing, hiking, wine trails, etc.). However, the strongest features of these spas are incredible experiences in thermo-mineral waters, in attractive pools with numerous attractions, which are extended on more than 43.000 m² surface (<http://en.slovenia-terme.si/offer/sport-and-entertainment/>).

Terme Čatež, the biggest Slovenian natural health resort, leads by the number of innovations. The spa offers the most diverse offer in this part of Europe for maintenance of health, relaxation, business encounters, and enjoying in sports 365 days a year. It offers entertainment for whole family: "Summer Thermal Riviera" (10.000 m²) and "Winter Thermal Riviera" (2.300 m²) with water attractions, such as: "thermal formula", Pirate's island, "adventure tree", pirate ships, pool with waves, surfing simulator, etc. Since June 2013, one more attractive innovation is the fun fair "Termopolis" which offers "summer explosion of fun" with first class adventures for all generations: race track "Skyflyer", "Zombie", "Temple of adventure", "Family rollercoaster Grisu", "Twister", "Rodeo", etc. Innovation is reflected in accommodation offer as well. Beside accommodation in hotels, they offer their guests car camping as well (450 units), which was pronounced as the best camp in Slovenia for the last four years, then accommodation in "Pirate bay", in 20 floating small houses on the lake, as well as "Indian village" with 25 tents which attracts guests from all parts of Europe for an adventure vacation in nature's arms (Dopolnjeno polletno poročilo Terme Čatež, 2014).

Due to such a diverse health tourism offer, Slovenian spas had 811.927 visitors and 2.998.959 overnight stays in 2014. Foreigners made a number of 352.361 guests, whose number of overnight stays was 1.332.794 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2015).

Spa tourism in Hungary. Hungary is a country with abundance of thermal waters. Owing to favourable natural characteristics, therapeutic thermal waters of high capacity can be found in more than 80% of the territory of Hungary. There are more than 1.300 thermal springs in Hungary (Guljaš, 2010). Hungarian spas are characterized by Roman, Greek, Turkish and northern countries architecture. Spa culture in Budapest is more than 2.000 years old (Hungary in Figures, 2012). By the number of thermal waters, Budapest is the richest capital in the world. In Hungary, there are approximately 350 public baths (Milojević, 2007). Services offered in

them are wellness and curative, they offer any kind of spa and physical therapy. Through the entire history, bathing and spa tourism has always played a significant role in Hungary. Today, a few hours spent in public bathroom are a part of daily routine for many Hungarians.

In Hungary in 2010, it was registered 206 spas which belong to the following categories: 100 spa baths, 107 thermal baths and 103 baths of adventure/experience. There is a total of 30 baths which are registered and make business in all three categories concurrently. The spas with highest capacity are: Hajdúszoboszló, which disposes with 57 pools and can have 26.000 visitors on daily basis, Harkány, which can take 15.000 visitors daily, then Debrecen, Gyula, Győr and Kiskunmajsa, each of them can have 11.000 visitors daily. When it comes to health treatments, the spas offer balneotherapy, hydrotherapy, electrotherapy, mechanotherapy, inhalation, reflexology, phototherapy, etc. All the spa hotels have at least one open pool, a rich offer of wellness content, diverse massages and saunas, cosmetic treatments, fitness centers, sport and recreation and cultural and entertainment facilities. In addition to traditional Hungarian kitchen, hotel restaurants offer vegetarian, as well as organic food (Hungary in Figures 2010).

Hajdúszoboszló spa is one of the most visited destinations in Hungary; by the number of domestic tourists, it is positioned right after Budapest, and by the number of foreign visitors it is fourth. Hajdúszoboszló is the biggest spa complex in Europe with 57 pools. The complex of open pools spreads on 30 ha and offers diverse attractions: giant pools, Pirate island with a lighthouse at the sand beach with palm trees, a few dozens of adrenaline slides which start at 12m high tower and of which some have additional safebelts. There are also numerous attractions for the youngest: children's maritime world with animals in the pools, slides, and playgrounds. The spa offers thematic pools with appearance that fascinates the visitors: Ice cave, pool cinema, tropical pool, "Gang", "Roman pool", sea pool, cave pool, "Páva" thermal pool, etc. (Hungary in Figures 2010).

The spas of Hungary recorded amazing number of 3.267.685 visitors in 2014 (580.685 domestic and 2.687.000 foreign visitors) (Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2015). The key attraction for foreign tourists is diversity of health tourism offer, high quality of services and qualified personnel, as well as good relation between price and quality (compared to prices in Western Europe).

Spa tourism in Czech Republic. Czech Republic disposes with 36 spas (Facts & Figures Tourism in the Czech Republic, 2008). The history of Czech spas has begun in 15th century and it has become indivisible part of cultural heritage and an extremely important part of health protection system of Central Europe. Due to the outstanding quality and proved curative effects of a few hundreds of natural mineral springs, muds rich in minerals and moderate climate, remarkable physiotherapists and doctors, Czech spas achieved very good reputation among spa lovers due to their excellent spa vacations with natural curing and rehabilitation therapies. Among famous people who visited and highly appreciated Czech spas were: Carlo IV, Peter the Great, Maria Theresa, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, members of the Rockefeller family, etc. The most famous Czech spas are Karlovy Vary, Mariánské Lázně, Luhačovice, as well as Teplice, which is the oldest spa of Czech Republic and Central Europe (Spa & Wellness Catalogue Czech Republic, 2014). They put all their efforts to guarantee a comfortable and relaxing stay for those who look for a holistic natural spa treatment or rehabilitation therapy or only a wellness vacation in unique magic spa atmosphere. They have a rich offer of sport and recreation, and cultural and entertainment activities for leisure time (Királová, 2010). Cultural events usually begin with official opening of the spa season in May and they end with special programs for Christmas or New Year.

Czech spas had 742.281 visitors in 2014, of which 350.488 were foreigners and 391.793 domestic guests. Total number of overnight stays in the same year was 6.409.326, of which 2.939.287 overnights were made by foreign and 3.470.039 by domestic visitors (Czech Statistical Office, 2015).

Karlovy Vary is the biggest and the most famous spa in Czech Republic. It carries the epithet of a modern, cosmopolitan spa. It is famous by its German name Carlsbad gotten after Roman emperor Carlo IV who discovered it by chance in 1358 while he was hunting (Spa & Wellness Catalogue Czech Republic, 2014). Prestigious image of the most famous European spa was obtained in 18th century, when the aristocrats came to cure and relax themselves. Today, Karlovy Vary is one of the most popular places in the world, favourite among celebrities, rich and famous. The spa has beautiful parks, rivers, Japanese garden, as well as 12 mineral springs whose temperature ranges from 30°C to 72°C. Height of the water fountain is about 12 m, and the strongest spring is Vřidlo which comes from depth of 3.000 m and reaches the temperature of 72°C. Beside

exceptional natural and anthropogenic resources, diverse spa&wellness offers, medical treatments, it offers extremely rich sport and recreation facilities: 3 golf courts, 16 tennis courts, a hippodrome and equestrian sports, hockey and ice skating, squash, etc. A big emphasis is put on cultural and entertainment manifestations during the whole year: jazz festival, carnival "Carlsbad", food festival, classical music concerts in colonnades and churches, balls in ballrooms, as well as big spectacle due to the opening of the spa season each spring. The spa is also a tourism attraction because of the fact that it is the host of the most significant international film festival in Central and Eastern Europe (www.karlovyvary.cz).

Spa tourism in Serbia

From II to IV century AD, the Romans built baths, pools and villas on the springs of thermo-mineral waters and thus their remains could be found in Niška Banja, Vrnjačka Banja, Sokobanja, Jošanička Banja and Kuršumlijska Banja.

Spa tourism in Serbia is primarily related to the traditional curing tourism, which implies prevention, curative or rehabilitation by applying natural-curing resources (thermo-mineral springs, mud and radioactive sand, climate, etc.). Serbia disposes with 40 spa and climate places where spa therapies are adapted to curing a wide range of health diseases and most frequently are applied by drinking mineral water or using curing baths (Tourism Organisation of Serbia, 2015).

Main comparative advantages of spa tourism in Serbia are rich natural curing resources, anthropogenic contents, long balneology tradition, high-quality medical staff, as well as qualified curing techniques. On the other hand, obsolete offer and inadequate health tourism product, as well as insufficient awareness of innovations in contemporary spa tourism, affect the competitiveness of Serbian spa tourism in international market. Accommodation facilities, which have not been renovated or modernized for years, also represent one of the main obstacles in the attraction of foreign tourists (Hrabovski Tomić & Milićević, 2012). It is on the example of accommodation capacities that we can see the possibility of a greater entrepreneurial action. Contemporary accommodation capacities should fit into spa environment by their appearance, they must have comfortable accommodation in their offer, open/closed pools, modern wellness centers, beauty salons, fitness centers, organized entertainment

of guests, business meeting rooms, restaurants with the offer of organic, vegetarian, macrobiotic food, etc.

Just in the recent years, Serbian spas begin to introduce innovations in their health tourism offer. Vrnjačka Banja, the most famous and the most visited spa in Serbia, is one of the first that took new steps in business undertakings. Seven thermo-mineral springs, four of which are used for balneology therapy: Hot water, Snežnik, Slatina, and Jezero (Borović Dimić, 2005), 27 ha of park surface in which there are 165 tree and rare exotic types of plants, 65% of the entire territory under the forests (Brčeski et al., 2010), these are only some of the characteristics of this spa which is rich in natural resources.

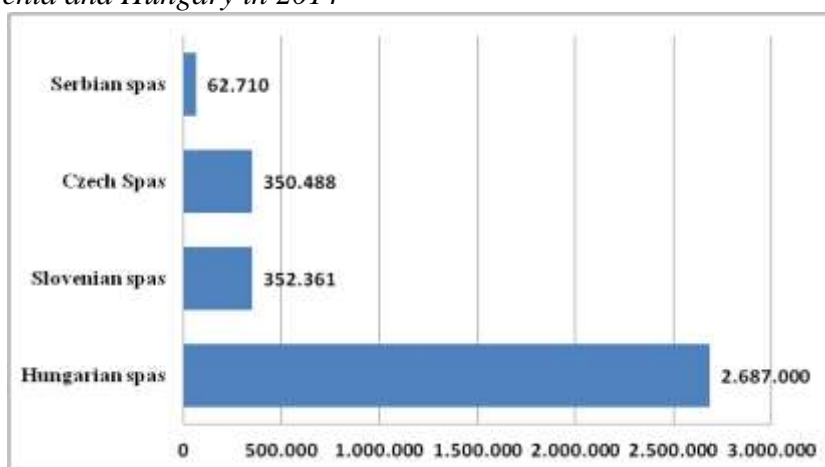
In 2005, “Merkur” Vrnjačka Banja opened the first wellness center in Serbian spas, named “Fons Romanus“, and then it introduced a series of novelties each year, such as: Aqua Center “Water Fall“, Peloid Center “Limus Romanus“, Center of Medical Esthetics, etc. (www.vrnjcispa.rs). Vrnjačka Banja puts a big emphasis on the cultural and entertainment offer. It organizes one of the most important cultural manifestations in Serbia named “Cultural Festivities of Vrnjačka Banja” (Ruđinčanin & Topalović, 2008). In order to attract younger people, in 2005 Vrnjačka Banja organized first “International Carnival” which became a tradition since then. It includes about 50 manifestations meant for all generations, and central event is a big international carnival parade (<http://vrnjackabanjakarneval.com/>).

From then, innovations in spa offer begin to be accepted by other spas in Serbia through the opening of modern spa&wellness centers, aqua centers, new accommodation facilities, and other attractive features. In Bukovička Banja, a luxurious hotel “Izvor” is opened, a congress, spa&wellness resort, which occupies the surface of more than 32.000 m². This prestigious hotel and tourist complex offers a wellness center with 9 pools of more than 1.000 m² of water surfaces with natural, curative, thermo-mineral water, filtered by the latest technology. Big aqua park with 3 pools is a separate part, it also has 12 slides for the adults, 3 slides for the children and numerous attractions (www.a-hotel-izvor.com). Sokobanja opened a water park which occupies 1.6 ha. Total surface of water content is 1.380 m² (<http://akva-park.soko-banja.org>). Banja Ždrelo offers a unique water park in Serbia, which works during the whole year, with day and night swimming in thermal water of 40°C temperature.

Banja Ždrelo has 6 pools (2 indoor and 4 outdoor pools) as well as a swimming pool with salty water (www.ruczdrelo.rs).

However, although it is diverse at the first glance, this offer is still modest in relation to the offer of famous spas in region, which was shown by the previous analysis. The best indicator that spa tourism of Serbia is not competitive in the international tourism market is the number of foreign guests (Figure 1). Primary guests in Serbian spas are domestic guests that make 84% (323.635) of visitors, while foreign guests make 16% (62.710) of the total number of spa guests in 2014 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2015).

Figure 1: *Number of foreign visitors in spas of Serbia, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary in 2014*



Source: *Data of Statistical Office of each individual country*

Offer of spa tourism in Serbia must keep the pace with the requirements of modern tourists if they want to attract foreign guests. Spas have long ago stopped being only “health resorts”, but modern spa centers that base their offer on sport and recreation, and cultural and entertainment activities, as well as wellness elements, which have even become the most important part of the offer. In order for spas to survive in extremely competitive tourism market, such reorientation is necessary (Milićević, 2015).

Development of entrepreneurship in spa tourism implies the appearance of different, innovative content in the offer. In continuation, there are some suggestions for innovations in the spa tourism of Serbia:

- Maximum usage of hot mineral water for the development of new types of health, and spa & wellness programs, for which there are natural conditions;
- Construction of big water surfaces for the purposes of health, relaxation, entertainment, animation, sports;
- Development of attractive sport and recreation activities;
- Raising the quality of accommodation capacities, i.e. renovating and modernization of old hotels;
- Modern boarding houses with accommodation of quality, and diverse offer in them (conference rooms, piano bars, spa centers, etc.);
- Replacement of classical forms of energy sources (coal, oil, mazut and wood) in accommodation facilities with renewable sources, primarily solar sources, wind, geothermal energy, biomass, biogas energy, heat pumps, small hydro-systems, etc.
- Opening of “beauty farms”, i.e. contemporary centers of health and beauty;
- Opening of specialized restaurants of healthy, vegetarian, diet, macrobiotic food;
- Opening organic food farms;
- Greater offer of specialized trades meant for users of spa tourism: authentic souvenirs, natural domestic products, products with healthy food label, natural cosmetics, medicinal plants products, etc.;
- Organization of picnics with specialized guides for picking medical herbs, edible mushrooms, forest berries, etc.

Guidelines for improvement of entrepreneurship in spa tourism of Serbia

In order to reach greater competitiveness of Serbian spa tourism in the international tourism market, greater involvement and strong support of relevant state institutions is required. With their measures, they can significantly improve entrepreneurship development in spa tourism of Serbia. Some of the measures could be:

- Offering the support to the growth of entrepreneurial sector through specialized programs of training and education for entrepreneurs and their employees in the field of management, quality management, market research, and marketing;
- Foundation of technological and incubator center for spa tourism, for technological transfer, exchange of experiences and business communication;

- Provision of required financial-technical support to entrepreneurs in the field of spa tourism;
- Formation of information and documentation center (information on donating and loan programs, information on market, bank of experts and advisors for entrepreneurship development in spa tourism, etc.);
- Marketing support to existing and newly emerged entrepreneurs (regular information on economic manifestations, support to entrepreneurs for participation in domestic and international tourist manifestations and fairs, printing offer prospect in spa tourism of Serbia, etc.);
- Creation of strategy and program for attraction of investments in Serbian spas, as well as support in promotion activities for the attraction of investors;
- Provision of required advisory-technical help to entrepreneurs for growth and investments (e.g. support for development of business plans of small spa hotels/boarding houses, specialized restaurants, organic food production farms, etc.).

Concept of strictly specialized spa resorts is mostly overcome. Going to spas (shorter visits per year) in order to improve health, increasingly suppresses the traditional, long health treatments. Serbian spa tourism should base its offer according to all this. Business strategy should be directed to the change of the old-fashioned spa image, through the development of innovative features in accordance to contemporary tendencies in international tourism market.

Conclusion

Since the moment when the essence of spa structures was “doctor” and “bath”, we came to structuring of activities of modern spas in accordance to the criteria of higher flexibility and with different other professional profiles that should be organized and managed. Spas became industry for products and services meant for health and general mental and physical welfare of people, with product line structured according to the type of clients: along with the traditional therapies, activities of wellness, rehabilitation, cosmetic spa treatments, and mental and physical relaxations were developed and even prevailed. Simultaneously, new accommodation culture was developed with the impact on the concept of spa facility and spa environment, as well as organization of service network according to client needs. Professionalism of spa and wellness staff profiles and appropriate education of managers are an essential

condition for offer quality (Scopel, 2011). European spas have succeeded in integrating their traditional values with the requirements of contemporary tourists. This practice is specific for the majority of European countries.

Despite the longest tradition in Serbian tourism and enormous potential, spa tourism is not competitive in the international tourism market. Disharmony in proportion between abundance of natural resources and level of their use is one of the characteristics of Serbian spa tourism. Examples that one nation uses less than 5% of natural wealth it has are rare in the world and that at the same time that wealth has been and has remained a strategic product in global proportions (Vešković, 2012).

In Serbian spas, it is required to maintain traditional curing and medical treatments, but the offer must be complemented with as many as possible attractive sport and recreation, and spa & wellness activities for healthy visitors. Visitors in spas should not only be patients, but healthy guests as well, who want spa stay for the purpose of vacation, recreation, entertainment, and relaxation. International tourism must be a priority in future development of the spa tourism. For these reasons, much greater entrepreneurial activities in Serbian spas are required, which need to base their offer looking up to famous spa centers in the region. Serbian spas must introduce innovative health tourism products, which will be competitive in the international tourism market.

In that sense, more intensive inclusion of relevant state institutions is recommended in creation of more favorable conditions for business, in order to encourage entrepreneurial activity and further development of Serbian spa tourism. Encouragement of healthy competition, providing help in the form of professional consultations, training of entrepreneurs and employees, technology and knowledge transfer, information transmission, marketing support, legal changes, are only some of the suggested measures for the competent authorities in order to further develop entrepreneurship, which would certainly result in greater competitiveness of Serbian spa tourism in the international market.

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