

## **MODEL OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN AP VOJVODINA AND ITS IMPACT ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*The specific model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina derives from its multiculturalism, characteristic tourist resources, authentic lifestyle, multilingual structure and openness of the local population. In the area of AP Vojvodina, tourism management is realized through the activities of the Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism, Vojvodina Tourist Organization and 44 local tourist organizations. The realization of their competences and tasks in the field of tourism contributes to the achievement of a balanced regional development. The Tourism Development Program of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period from 2018 to 2022, through a strategic and systematic approach aims to achieve multiplicative effects on overall socio-economic development, which resulted in the need to analyze the features and possibilities of improving this model of tourism management, and in particular its impact on local and regional development.*

*Key Words: Model of tourism management, AP Vojvodina, Regional development*

*JEL classification: K19, R58, Z32*

### **Introduction**

Tourism has long been regarded as a side effect, more precisely, a result of social and economic development. However, the first significant research has shown that tourism is not only a result of economic prosperity but also a significant factor in economic growth and regional development.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council and the World Tourism Organization, tourism as an industry is affecting economic growth in many ways, and above all, through stimulating consumption resulting

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from this activity, and in that sense commercial tourism generates about 10% of global GDP and creates 284 million jobs (Bogetić et al, 2017, p. 97).

Cohesion between globalization processes, emerging technologies and increasing competitiveness through lowering prices of tourism services is the basis for the emergence of new tourist destinations in developing regions and a new chance for international tourism (Vujović et al, 2012, p. 43). In this context, tourism is a mechanism for stimulating the economic development of certain regions where tourism potentials exist or can be created. Bearing in mind that in the Republic of Serbia, industry and other commercial sectors are not equally developed in all parts of the country, it is clear that tourism should be used as a basic instrument for achieving the prosperity of different regions.

The legal framework of the Republic of Serbia in the field of tourism is the basis for the development of tourism and related industries. According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025, the weaknesses of the tourism in the Republic of Serbia arise from the incoordination and inactive role of local authorities, which affects competitiveness in this field. In this sense, it is necessary to overcome these obstacles in order to capitalize on the opportunities that this commercial field provides and meet the requirements of the modern tourism market, thus fully realizing all the effects that tourism has on socio-economic, regional and local development, as well as on the development of complementary commercial activities (Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025 ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 98/2016)).

According to the Law on Regional Development, regional development is a long-term and comprehensive process for the promotion of sustainable economic and social development of regions and local government units, taking into account their specificities (Law on Regional Development "Official Gazette of RS", Nos. 51/2009, 30/2010 and 89/2015 - other law), Art. 4). Hence, regional development should be understood as a process that involves the advancement of different areas and activities of a particular region or units of local government, thereby achieving sustainable economic growth and contributing to the prosperity of the society as a whole, while respecting all their local and regional specificities.

Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (AP Vojvodina, henceforth) is a territorial unit characterized by a number of specific demographics, cultural and historical features that are reflected in different tourism opportunities. The model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina arises directly from these specificities and is defined by the Constitutional and legislative framework. In that sense, the focus of this paper is tourism as a matter of special interest for the Province, in other words, the model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina, with special emphasis on its impact on regional development and on the possibilities of improvement of this area in order to contribute to the exploitation of full tourism potential of this region and an opportunity for effective impact on economic growth.

### **Authentic and delegated competencies of the provincial government in the field of tourism**

The distinction of a particular part of the territory in national, historical, economic and other matters reflects the sense of territorial autonomy, and "the right of narrower territorial units to exercise legislative power in material sense in those fields with certain particularities of interests or needs strengthens also with adequate sources of income and other instruments of impact on the state in these fields." (Golić & Počuča, 2017, p. 772). Taking into account all the specific features that characterize AP Vojvodina in terms of geographical, historical and demographic aspects, it is clear that tourism is an area for which there are special provincial interests, meaning that tourism is a commercial area where there is a greater need for decentralization.

The competencies in the field of tourism are divided between the state, autonomous provinces, municipalities and cities as units of local self-government. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, autonomous provinces, in accordance with the Constitution and their Statutes, regulate the election, organization, and operation of the bodies and services they establish, and in this context regulate issues of provincial importance in various fields, such as tourism. (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia "Official Gazette of the RS, No. 98/2006", Art. 183). The law defines which issues are of provincial importance and as such falls under the scope of the provincial government.

Pursuant to the Law on Establishing the Competences of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, through its bodies, in the field of tourism, service industry, spas, and health resorts, in accordance with the law, AP

Vojvodina regulates tourism planning and development of AP Vojvodina, in accordance with the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, adopts the Tourism Development Strategy of AP Vojvodina, as well as programs for its implementation, motions the Government to adopt an act on the designation of tourist spaces in the territory of AP Vojvodina, proposes a member of the Commission for the Categorization of Tourist Places, establishes the Tourist Organization of AP Vojvodina and other organizations for the promotion and development of tourism and regulates the use of mineral and thermal waters, balneological and climatic resources and can establish spas and health resorts in the territory of AP Vojvodina, in accordance with the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (Law on Establishing the Competences of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina "Official Gazette of the RS, Nos. 99/2009 and 67/2012 – Decision of the Constitutional Court", Art. 23).

In addition, the essence of the right to local self-government stems from the authentic competences of municipalities and cities, which, among other areas, relate to tourism. In this sense, municipalities, through their bodies, in accordance with the law, work on the development and promotion of tourism (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia "Official Gazette of the RS, No. 98/2006", Art. 190). As we can see, as an entity of territorial autonomy, the province has broader powers deriving from its higher level of specificity. The distinction of AP Vojvodina, primarily economic, is proclaimed by the Constitution, but at the same time, the unitary character of the state is established. In this sense, provincial competencies are determined by law, but they must be within the Constitutional limits, both in terms of authentic and delegated affairs.

Regarding tourism, the competence of the State is to regulate the system and conduct policy, while the province's competences relate to those issues that are of provincial importance, in other words, the decentralized competences of the province relate to normative, planning, financial and administrative aspects (Golić & Počuča, 2017). In this respect, it is important to emphasize that it is crucial to establish the compliance of planning acts of different levels of government in all areas, including in the field of tourism.

### **Model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina**

The model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina is based on its specificities, which are reflected in multiculturalism, characteristic tourist

resources, multilingual structure, etc. Tourism management in AP Vojvodina is realized through the activities of the Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism, regional tourism organization – Tourism Organization of Vojvodina and 44 local tourism organizations. According to the Law on Tourism, the Autonomous Province and local self-government units, within their respective competencies established by the law governing local self-government and other special laws, adopt a tourism development program that must be in accordance with the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, which must be submitted to the ministry responsible for tourism, i.e. the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, for a prior opinion (Law on Tourism "Official Gazette of the RS", no. 17/2019", Article 12).

The Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism plays a key role in the management of tourism in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which, in accordance with the law and the Statute of the AP Vojvodina, performs the tasks of the Provincial Administration in the field of tourism, catering, spas and health resorts, fairs and other commercial events. As part of the provincial administration, the Secretariat prepares legal acts that should be adopted by the Provincial Assembly or the Provincial Government, thereby contributing to a balanced regional development (Provincial Assembly Decision on the Tourism Development Program in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2018-2022 "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 54/2018).

Regarding the Tourism Organization of Vojvodina, its main activity is reflected in the adoption of the annual program of activities and promotional plans in accordance with the Strategic Marketing Plan, and other plans and programs of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. Furthermore, the Tourism Organization of Vojvodina works on coordinating activities of business and other entities related to the promotion of tourism in the territory of the Autonomous Province conducts educational programs and skill improvement courses for employees in the tourism industry, collects all types of tourism information in order to inform the public, providing informational and promotional material promoting the tourist values of AP Vojvodina (printed publications, audio, and video promotional material, internet presentations, etc.), as well as undertaking activities on drafting and participating in the development and realization of domestic and international projects in the field of tourism and undertaking other activities in accordance with the law, its Founding Act

and the Statute (Law on Tourism, "Official Gazette of RS", No. 17/2019, Art. 39).

According to the Law on Tourism, local self-government units can be founders of tourism organizations or entrust tourism activities to other legal entities. Tourism organization at the level of local self-government unit performs the activities of promotion and development of tourism in the local self-government. The unit coordinates activities and facilitates cooperation between business and other entities in tourism, which directly and indirectly work on the promotion of tourism development and on the educational programs and skills improvement courses of employees in tourism.

Furthermore, local tourism organizations perform the activities of adopting the annual activities program and promotional planning in accordance with the Strategic Marketing Plan and other plans and programs of the National Tourism Organization of Serbia. They perform the tasks of providing and promoting information and promotional material promoting the tourist values of the local self-government unit (printed publications, audio and video promotional material, on-line promotion tools - websites, social networks and related digital activities, souvenirs, etc.).

They perform the activities of collecting and publishing information on the entire tourist offer in its territory, as well as other activities important for the promotion of tourism and organizing and participating in the organization of tourist, scientific, professional, sporting, cultural and other meetings and events. They establish tourist information centers (for receiving tourists, providing free information to tourists, collecting information for the purposes of informing tourists, acquainting tourists with the quality of tourist offer, informing the competent authorities about tourists' complaints, etc.).

They manage the tourism spaces, mediate the provision of services in domestic crafts and rural tourism households, encourage the implementation of programs for the construction of tourist infrastructure and landscaping, as well as undertake activities on drafting and participating in the development and realization of domestic and international projects in the field of tourism. They also undertake other activities on preparation and collection of data, drawing up questionnaires, analyzing data and other information in the field of tourism and perform tasks related to the commercial activity, as well as other activities in

accordance with the law, the founding act and the statute. The local tourist organizations at the level of local government units are obliged to submit their annual activities program and promotional plans, prior to adoption, to the National Tourism Organization of Serbia for obtaining prior consent pertaining to the planned promotional activities. If they fail to ask for the opinion, they are barred from receiving financial incentives from the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, in the year to which the activities program and the promotional plan refer to (Law on Tourism "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 17 2019), Article 41).

Numerous provincial and state incentives play a special role in the development and promotion of tourism in AP Vojvodina through financing or co-financing various activities of local governments in the field of tourism, as well as legal entities and citizens' associations, according to the data provided in the Tourism Development Program of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2018-2022. In 2017, the Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism aided the development of tourism with around 300,000,000.00 RSD. Part of this incentive is directed to local governments in order to improve the tourist offer, among other things, to modernize the tourism potential of local governments through the preparation of plans and technical project documentation, the development and branding of tourism sites, work on infrastructure and the promotion of spa and health tourism. In addition, significant funds were directed towards business entities, i.e. micro and small companies and entrepreneurs, in order to improve the quality of the service industry in existing facilities, increase the number of nights and length of stay of tourists in AP Vojvodina by improving the quality of services and additional tourism experiences in existing catering facilities, as well as to improve congress tourism offers, innovation of business entities, stimulate increase of business entities' income and creation of new jobs, and consequently increase of tax revenues and fees of the Republic of Serbia, improvement of the overall tourist offer and competitiveness of AP Vojvodina in the foreign and domestic markets.

The funds for stimulating tourism development in AP Vojvodina were also directed to citizens' associations with the aim of affirming manifestation tourism, improving the quality of existing manifestations and increasing the number of participants, increasing the overall tourist offer through improving manifestation tourism and promoting tourist offer of AP Vojvodina at events of regional and international character (Provincial Assembly Decision on the Tourism Development Program in the

Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2018-2022, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 54/2018).

In addition to these investments, the Provincial Secretariat finances, or co-finances, the presentation of AP Vojvodina in the country and the region, as well as the development of various studies, research and development programs and education in the field of tourism. Additional investments from the state budget are also directed toward entities from AP Vojvodina, for infrastructure projects (59,000,000.00 RSD), for promotion of tourism products, manifestations, education, training in tourism, etc. (26,050,000.00 RSD) and for EXIT festival (35,000,000.00 RSD). When it comes to overhead costs of local tourism organizations, administrative expenditures account for the largest part of expenditures, which is around 30%, followed by the organization of events and appearances at fairs. The situation is similar with regard to the Tourism Organization of Vojvodina, with about 20% of its expenditures going to represent Vojvodina at fairs and cities in the country and the region, with an equal share of administrative costs, while expenditures on communication and design do not meet the standards of modern tourist destinations (Provincial Assembly Decision on Tourism Development Program in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2018-2022, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 54/2018). In this context, it is clear that only large investments and an adequate marketing strategy regarding tourism development can contribute to the advancement of this area (Paunović, 2014).

### **The impact of tourism development in AP Vojvodina on regional development**

Various studies have shown that tourism is a very significant factor in regional development compared to other commercial activities. With its driving capacity, tourism creates demand in tourist destinations for complementary products and services and develops specific markets that follow the influx of people. Therefore, encouraging tourism development is a significant prerequisite for improving the socio-economic status of each region (Zaman et al., 2010). The degree of development of the region is calculated by applying the national average gross domestic product per capita, and when it comes to the level of development of a local government unit, it is determined by applying basic and corrective indicators of economic development. The basic indicator for measuring the degree of economic development is the sum of wages and pensions in the local self-government unit and the budget revenues of the local self-government unit,

excluding the funds received from another body for eliminating the consequences of extraordinary circumstances, expressed per capita, while corrective indicators imply demographic decline or growth, unemployment rate and education level (<https://www.regionalnirazvoj.gov.rs/Lat/Default.aspx>).

Tourism as an industry branch has two basic functions, economic which is primary and non-economic which is reflected in several secondary and consequent functions. The most important direct impacts of tourism arise from the impact on GDP and national income, the impact on steady wages, the impact on the employment rate of the population and the value of investments, as well as the impact on the accelerated development of underdeveloped countries and regions. When it comes to the impact on the GDP and national income, tourism cannot be considered as its creator, but tourism spending certainly has a significant impact in this regard. Considering that tourism is a significant source of foreign currency, through the country's balance of payments, its influence on the economic landscape of a particular region or state is evident. Tourism development directly influences job creation, which has an impact on the unemployment rate (Lakićević et al., 2019). On the other hand, employment policy is a driver of economic development of the country and a very important issue in the field of tourism, since the quality of human resources and the modalities of employment are one of the crucial elements of tourism growth and development (Škorić & Jovanović, 2018). Therefore, there is a close link between tourism development and the economic development of a particular region, which is realized through the impact of tourism spending and tourism investment on general commercial activity and participation in the creation of the GDP (Bošković, 2009). Along those lines, the improvement of tourism development in AP Vojvodina can produce results in terms of economic growth and regional development, however, this impact could be stronger if we fully exploit the tourism potential of this part of Serbia.

Numerous distinctions that characterize AP Vojvodina as a tourist destination, followed by dynamic changes in political and social circumstances, have caused tourism in Vojvodina to go through very different periods. Expansion in this sphere was recorded between 1960 and the mid-1980s, after which there was a significant decline in tourism activity in the 1990s, closely relating to the political and economic conditions that were indicative of Serbia in this period. The increase in the number of tourists has started around the year 2000, however, this growth

has only accelerated with the achievement of greater openness of Serbia to Europe and the realization of more stable social, political and economic factors in the country (Section 2.20. AP Vojvodina Development Program 2014-2020 with Action Plan for Implementation of Priorities of AP Vojvodina Development Program 2014-2020, "Official Gazette of APV", No. 13/2014, p. 315.).

The increase in the number of international travelers is noticeable in all regions of the world, with Europe remaining the dominant tourist region in the world (Šušić & Đorđević, 2019). Considering this, it is clear that Vojvodina as a tourist destination is not fully utilizing the potential it has, given its geographical position, specific cultural and historical heritage, multiculturalism, tourist offer, etc. The Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2006 to 2015 (Section 6, Official Gazette of the RS, No. 91/06, p. 24.) contained goals related to the moderate and ambitious growth of the total number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays. The table shows the actual growth from 2006 to 2015 in Vojvodina, as well as the projection of the so-called moderate and ambitious growth according to real indicators, their absolute difference, index, and percentage of realization of the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025 (Section 2.1., Table 1, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 98/2016, p. 8.).

Table 1: *Actual growth of the total number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Vojvodina and so-called moderate and ambitious growth according to real indicators.*

<b>Vojvodina</b>					
Initial situation in 2006 and the situation in 2015	Initial Situation	2015.	Difference	Index 2006/2015	Growth %
Number of arrivals	245.600	413.332	167.732	168	68
No. of overnight stays	686.200	994.314	308.114	145	45
<b>Moderate growth projection</b>					
	Assessment	Situation in 2015.	Difference		
Number of arrivals	917.000	413.332	-503.668	45	-55
No. of overnight stays	3.209.500	994.314	-2.215.186	31	-69

<b>Ambitious growth projection</b>					
	Assessment	Situation in 2015.	Difference		
Number of arrivals	1.099.500	413.332	-686.168	38	-62
No. of overnight stays	3.484.400	994.314	-2.490.086	29	-71

Source: *Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025 ("Official Gazette of the RS", No. 98/2016)*

Therefore, from the data presented in the table, it can be concluded that there was a significant increase in the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Vojvodina. However, this growth is still not at a satisfactory level given that not even the moderate projection of growth set out in 2006 has been achieved.

It is difficult to determine which mechanisms have failed in achieving the projection of growth in the number of tourist arrivals and overnight stays, but as a rule, these are insufficient investments and inadequate marketing activities, in other words, a small number of promotional activities. From the aspect of tourism promotion, it is very important to take into account the impact of mass media on citizens' familiarity with various tourist destinations, especially when it comes to tourists from abroad (Subotin & Pastor, 2018). Political and war events that marked the area in the 1990s cast a shadow on the image of Serbia, and thus of Vojvodina as a tourist destination, which created media confusion for foreign tourists regarding the attractiveness and security of the area as a tourist destination. On the other hand, reporting on numerous festivals, cultural, artistic and other events held in Vojvodina has greatly contributed to the growth of the number of tourists.

Therefore, investing in marketing activities, enabling competitiveness and responding to market demands are key elements that have contributed to the promotion of tourism and branding of Vojvodina as a recognizable and attractive destination (Bulatović et al., 2016). In order to fully utilize the tourism potential of AP Vojvodina, it is necessary that all levels of government pay special attention to promotional activities, and that the general objectives of promotional activities are in line with strategic goals and guidelines of tourism development of the Republic of Serbia. Accordingly, the positive impact of tourism on the economic growth and regional development of the country can only be achieved by improving

the positioning of a tourist destination based on quality promotional activities (Vujić, 2009). In this context, it is very important to take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the Internet to bring AP Vojvodina as a destination closer to potential tourists, moreover, it is necessary to improve the possibilities of online reservations and the availability of information on all issues of importance, such as happenings and events, in order to attract tourists, primarily from abroad (Buhalis & Licata, 2002).

One of the unique characteristics of Vojvodina stems from the fact that out of a total of 45 local communities, only 5 are located in areas that are not considered rural (Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci, Stara Pazova, Temerin, and Pancevo). Thus, significant investments should be directed towards the development of rural areas, but also to exploit their potential for enhancing tourist supply and attracting tourists interested in rural tourism. What distinguishes Vojvodina, in particular, is its multiculturalism, with a large number of national minorities that enrich Vojvodina's specificity with its identity, culture, tradition, language, and religion. Consequently, it is precisely these specificities that characterize AP Vojvodina as a tourist destination that should be used for the promotion and development of tourism, particularly, for the promotion of AP Vojvodina as a tourist destination.

When it comes to boosting tourism, world trends focus on organizing events such as various festivals and happenings, and in line with that emphasize the importance of the cooperation of travel agencies with the organizers of such events (Getz & Page, 2016).

In AP Vojvodina, there is a noticeable effort to follow world trends. In this context, there is an increasing number of events organized by various entities at the level of local government units, however, most of these events are still directed at the local population, with the lack of adequate infrastructure and marketing activities aimed at the promotion of these events. Therefore, it is necessary to make greater efforts to implement all these mechanisms in order to have a stronger impact on tourism promotion in AP Vojvodina, which would greatly contribute to the economic growth and development of this region, which is of particular importance given the unequal socio-economic development and uneven living conditions in this part of Serbia.

## Conclusion

Considering the tendency of increasing regional disparities and deepening socio-economic development inequalities, it is necessary to pay more attention to the mechanisms of regional development promotion, where tourism can be used as a very influential factor of economic growth. Tourism is not the result of socio-economic growth but is an instrument of its realization. Advancements in tourism can only be achieved on the basis of adequate legal regulation, precise development strategies, and their effective implementation. The shared competencies in the field of tourism between the state, autonomous provinces, municipalities, and cities as units of local self-government means that all levels of government have equal responsibility for the development of this commercial area, however, an active role of local authorities and mutual coordination between them are of key importance.

The model of tourism management in AP Vojvodina is specific, bearing in mind that tourism management in AP is realized through the activities of the Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism, Tourist Organization of Vojvodina and as many as 44 local tourist organizations. Therefore, a large number of entities are working on the promotion of tourism in AP Vojvodina and with their own development programs. These programs must be aligned with the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, but their interconnectedness, coherence and joint action towards the achievement of all strategic goals, is of particular importance. Improvement of any area is not possible without incentives and investment, which is why investments of the Provincial Secretariat for Economy and Tourism directed towards local governments and businesses for the promotion of tourism are of utmost importance. Given that these investments did not produce the expected results thus far, it is necessary to allocate larger funds for these purposes. Tourism Development Program in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina for the period 2018-2022 is a far-reaching document that was drafted with the aim of approaching tourism strategically and systematically, with due regard for all the effects it has on the overall socio-economic, local and regional development. It is crucial to implement all the principles, plans and guidelines that are set in place by this development program. Accordingly, when it comes to tourism, AP Vojvodina has all the prerequisites in terms of adequate legal regulation and management models, with it also having tourism potential for the improvement of this area, and thus has the opportunity to improve the socio-economic status of this region by the driving capacity of tourism.

However, significant efforts need to be made to implement the defined plans, invest more resources and improve cooperation at all levels.

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