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Sports and Health as Cornerstones of Tourism Development: Case Study of Montenegro

Andela Jakšić-Stojanović and Neven Šerić

Abstract

The modern phenomenon of tourism is more focused on specific forms of tourism in which sports and health tourism play a very important role. That fact is not surprising having in mind that they represent interconnected activities that complement each other and give each other completely new dimension. On one side, sports and health represent very important content of tourist offer because of the fact they enable tourists to become active participants in various activities, and on the other side, they represent important driving force for visiting particular destination. The idea of this chapter is to provide a theoretical and practical framework of this issue with a special focus on case study of Montenegro. According to the results of the research that was carried out, the general conclusion is that Montenegro has extremely valuable natural resources and potentials for the development of sports and health tourism, but there are still a lot of challenges that should be faced in the future in order to improve the quality of tourist offer and the level of tourists' satisfaction as well as to create completely new image of the destination and position it as high-quality sports and health tourist destination on international market.

Keywords: tourism, sport, health, destination, Montenegro

1. Introduction

Sports and health tourism represent some of the fastest-growing segments in tourism industry, and their popularity has been significantly increased. That is the main reason why these two phenomena attract attention of many authors especially in the last decades [1–4]. Since ancient times, sports and health have been a very important driving force and motif for visiting particular destination [5]. Today, it seems more than ever before that they represent very important content of tourist offer in which tourists become active participants in realization of many activities such as hiking and biking, water sports, tennis, golf, skiing, riding, sports games, extreme sports activities, wellness and spa, etc.

The expansion of these two types of tourism is completely expected having on mind many factors—significant demographic changes, the increasing share of the elderly population, prolonged life expectancy of the population, habits and interests of a baby-boom generation, as well as some other factors such as stress, the lack of free time, unhealthy lifestyles, the usage of modern technologies, pollution, etc. In that sense, it is clear why health and sports tourism play an important role in revitalization of the psychophysical abilities of people. Trends and perspectives on

international tourist market go in the same direction, so in the future it is expected to have a significant growth of nature tourism combined with sporting activities, health-recreational tourism, golf tourism, wellness tourism, as well as activities such as fitness, mountain hiking, mountain biking, hiking and biking, etc. [6, 7]. Rafting and kayaking as well as extreme sports are also expected to expand.

It is important to mention the fact that sports and tourism in the last decades succeeded to create a variety of different forms which attract a large number of different target groups, so it is not unexpected that a large variety of mutual interest from the management point of view appeared [8, 9]. That convergence of mutual interests represents very powerful tool in the process of creating a high-quality whole-year destination with diversified offer and competitive advantages on international tourist market.

2. Methods

The analysis of development of sports and health tourism in Montenegro started from the SWOT analysis which actually represents the process of identification of main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats [10]. The aim of this analysis was to identify the main internal strengths and weaknesses of Montenegro, as well as external opportunities and threats that may have an influence on its future development as sports and health tourist destination.

Except SWOT analysis, survey among the tourists was carried out as well. The first phase was the preparation of structured questionnaire in order to address the needs of this paper. The questionnaire contains a total of 14 questions. The first part relates to biological, social, and economic characteristics of respondents, while the second part contains questions that relate to the subject of the research itself. The questionnaire contains open-ended questions in which respondents independently present their opinions and attitudes, closed questions in which respondents choose one of the offered answers, as well as the so-called pivot questions in which respondents rank responses according to their significance. The questionnaires were prepared in English, Russian, Albanian, and Montenegrin/Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian language.

The second phase was conducting a survey which was realized from June to September 2018. Ten interviewers were included in the realization of this task, and they were thoroughly familiar with the method of interviewing the tourists. One hundred and forty respondents were personally interviewed in 12 Montenegrin municipalities. Respondents were both domestic and foreign tourists. They were selected by random sample method, and the sample was stratified.

The third phase was statistical analysis of the results of the survey with a special accent on data which refer on motivation, preferences, and attitudes of tourists, as well as the level of their satisfaction with quality of tourist offer.

The analyses of the results of the survey and their appropriate interpretation led to preliminary conclusions related to positioning Montenegro as sports and health tourism destination. These conclusions are strongly supported by data which refer to trends and perspectives on international tourism market in order to create a theoretical and practical framework for the creation of strategy of sports and health tourism in Montenegro.

3. Results and discussion

The analysis of development of sports tourism in Montenegro is presented in **Table 1**.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural beauties (sea, mountains, national parks, rivers, lakes, etc.)• Extremely valuable natural resources—sand, mug, mineral waters, thermal sources, etc.• Climate conditions• The richness of contrasts• Closeness to large emitting markets• State of ecological country• Competitive prices• Growing number of 4- and 5-star hotels with high-quality wellness and spa and sports infrastructure• The investments and the improvement of infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of clear vision, mission, clear strategic goals and measures, and activities that should be carried out in the future• Mostly underdeveloped infrastructure• Nonintegrated tourism product• Lack of integration in terms of policy, research, and education• Lack of promotion on national and international levels• Lack of service quality control• Insufficient power of clusters, associations, and societies in the field of sports and health tourism• Low level of cooperation between different stakeholders
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipated growth rate of tourism industry• Prediction of UNWTO as well as positive trends and perspectives in tourism and hospitality industry in Montenegro• International recognition of Montenegro as a tourist destination• Diversification of consumer segments and sports and health tourism products• Anticipated growth rate of sports and health tourism• The increasing share of elderly population• Trends for more healthy and active ways of life• Stress, lack of free time• Baby-boomer generation• Raising awareness of people regarding the need to preserve health• The process of EU integrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instability of the region• Climate changes• Increasing number of competitive destinations in the field of sports and health tourism• The rapid development of technology that imposes the need of continuous investment and improvement of quality of tourist offer

Table 1.
SWOT analysis of Montenegro as sports and health tourism destination.

By analyzing the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Montenegro as sports tourism destination, as well as opinions, expectations, beliefs, and attitudes of tourists, it may be concluded that natural resources such as sea, mountains, national parks, beautiful landscapes, lakes, rivers, etc. as well as a very favorable climate and geographical position in relation to large European centers represent a great base for future development of sports tourism. Except that, it should mention that a clear commitment of country to reach the European market, huge projects in tourism, a growing number of 4- and 5-star hotels with wellness, spa, and sports facilities, recent investment in infrastructure, etc. make Montenegro a serious candidate for regional, if not a European, destination of sports tourism. In combination with trends and perspectives on global market such as anticipated growth of sports tourism, trends for healthy active ways of life, raising awareness about the importance of health for quality of life, etc., this potential becomes even bigger.

But, on the other side, it is not difficult to conclude that there are many weaknesses of the destination itself such as underdeveloped infrastructure, lack of integral strategic approach, insufficiently integrated tourist products, lack of promotion on international and national levels, etc. which may seriously slow down the future development of Montenegrin tourism if there is no strategic plan for their overcoming. This is extremely important having in mind the fact that the increasing number of competitive destinations in the field of sports and health tourism as well as rapid development of technologies imposes the need of continuous investment and improvement of quality of tourist offer.

The results of the SWOT analyses were strongly supported by the results of the survey in which 140 respondents participated. Out of the total number of respondents, 52% are female and 48% were male. About 25% of the total number of respondents are domestic tourists and 75% are foreign tourists (25% were tourists from the neighboring countries—Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Albania—while 50% were tourists from other countries). When it comes to age structure of guests, the highest number of tourists 26% was between 20 and 29, 26% between 30 and 39 years, 19% between 40 and 49, 15% between 50 and 59, 7% of tourists between 15 and 19, and 7% has 60 or more years.

Most tourists have a high school diploma (40%) or college (40%), 18% have a higher school diploma, 1% has only completed elementary school, and 1% has unfinished elementary school. When it comes to monthly income, the research indicates that 46% of respondents have average monthly incomes, 20% have incomes above the average of their country, 8% are significantly above the average, while 15% have incomes below the average of their country, and 11% were found to be significantly below the country's average. This is completely in accordance with trends and perspectives on the global market—according to some authors, the majority of tourists in the future will actually be tourists with some average monthly incomes [11].

The results of the research showed that tourists in Montenegro usually reside 7 (40%) or 10 days (26%) and 24% of tourists in Montenegro stay up to 5 days, while 10% of tourist stay more than 10 days. Trend for shorter, but more frequent breaks is evident. Most of the tourists (55%) spend between 250 and 500 euros per person (accommodation and travel costs excluded), 12% between 500 and 1000 euros per person, and 8% over 1000 *euros*, while 25% spend less than 250 euros per person during holiday. These data are also completely in accordance with trends and perspectives on global tourist market in which consumption in tourist destination is continuously increasing [12]. For most of the tourists, Montenegro has completely fulfilled their expectations (58%), and the percentage of those for whom Montenegro exceeded expectations is also very high—22%. For 20% of respondents, Montenegro only partially reached the expectations or did not reach them at all. The most important results of the survey are presented in **Table 2**.

The results of the research clearly show that although the slogan “wild beauty” is clear, effective, and attractive, it does not present the main competitive advantage of Montenegro such as the richness of contrasts, natural beauties, the state of ecological country, and the short distance from the sea to the mountains. Not only the verbal but also the visual elements of the logo do not represent the uniqueness of the destination itself.

It is clear that it is necessary to do rebranding of a destination itself including its logo and slogan which should be based on its main competitive advantages which make the destination unique, different, special, and superior to the main competitors [13]. In that sense, previous logo of Montenegro as tourist destination seems to be more appropriate because of the fact that it includes important elements of tourist offer of Montenegro such as nature, sea, weather, etc. even in its visual part. The fact that this logo was strongly supported by marketing tools which perfectly

Associations with slogan “wild beauty”		Tourists’ perception of the seasonality of tourist offer	
63%	Wilderness	65%	Montenegro is perceived as a summer destination
26%	Natural beauties	25%	Montenegro is perceived as a winter destination
6%	Richness of contrasts	10%	Montenegro is perceived as a whole-year destination
5%	Other		
Key disadvantages of future development of Montenegrin tourism		The main motives for visiting Montenegro	
42%	Pool infrastructure	40%	Natural beauties
18%	Noise, crowding, and dirtiness	13%	Experiences and events
14%	Lack of strategic planning	13%	Active holiday and sports activities
12%	Lack of promotion	12%	National parks
10%	High prices	7%	Gastronomy
4%	Other	7%	State of ecological country
		5%	Health reasons
		3%	Other
The frequency of practicing sports activities during vacations		Tourists’ satisfaction with sports and health tourism offered in Montenegro	
78%	Regularly practiced (swimming, hiking, biking, rafting, etc.)	55%	Generally satisfied
15%	Rarely practiced	10%	Highly satisfied
7%	Do not practice any kind of activity at all	15%	Quite satisfied
		13%	Not satisfied
		7%	Not satisfied at all

Table 2.
The most important results of the survey.

identified all competitive advantages of Montenegro as tourist destination such as state of ecological country, richness of contrasts, biodiversity, gastronomy, the hospitality of local people, etc. is an additional proof for this statement.

The fact is that tourists identified very clearly the main disadvantages of the destination itself such as poor infrastructure, noise, crowding and dirtiness, the lack of strategic planning, lack of promotion, etc. It is important to mention that there are already some activities that are carried out at national level regarding the mentioned weaknesses. One of the most important ones is the construction of the first highway in Montenegro whose construction began in 2015, and it includes four phases in order to connect better south, central, and north part of the country as well as Montenegro with neighboring countries. The first phase that connects the capital city and north part and that includes the construction of 42 tunnels and 92 bridges is expected to be finished in 2020. After the realization of this project, the biggest one since the country’s independence, the traffic infrastructure will be

significantly improved which will lead to the improvement of the quality of tourist offer as well. Regarding the strategic planning, it is necessary to mention that the set of strategic acts has been already adopted by the government, but there are some problems regarding their implementation which are mainly caused by insufficiently clear roles and responsibilities and lack of cooperation between different stakeholders—on national, regional, and local levels as well. One interesting issue that is recognized by the tourists is lack of promotion at all levels, and this is definitely one of the problems that should be paid great attention in the future. Although the strategic marketing plan for period 2018–2020 has been adopted, most of the proposed measures and activities are still not realized. It is also necessary to adopt the strategy of digital marketing having on mind the role of digital media in the era of globalization, internationalization, and modernization of business. In that sense, the focus should be put on online promotion (redesign of web presentations, preparation of online brochures, promotion of offer on social networks and platform, storytelling, interactive infographics, virtual reality, etc.), digital management—customer relationships (study visits, data basis, loyalty programs etc.)—promotion of digitalization, and online promotion on national level (promotion of online payment, training of representatives of tourism and hospitality industry regarding online marketing, raising awareness of local people about benefits of development of tourism and hospitality industry, and the importance of their active participation, etc.). Except this strategy, strategy of sports and health tourism in Montenegro should be prepared and adopted as well. Its preparation and implementation should be based on the strong cooperation between tourism and sports and health industry as well as on integration in terms of policy, research, and education, which will represent the cornerstone for future development of these kinds of tourism in Montenegro.

Although holiday on the seaside which is mostly perceived as “passive holiday” (3S: sea, sun, sand) still represents the main motif of visit to Montenegro (65%), its significance is much lower than before. This means that it is necessary to introduce, develop, and promote new tourist products and services which will attract tourist to visit the destination not only during the summer season [14]. Special attention should be definitely paid on sports and health tourism, having on mind the potential of Montenegro for their development, trends, and perspectives on international tourist market as well as the fact that these specific types of tourism may significantly contribute to solving of problem of seasonality [15].

During making choice of Montenegro as holiday destination, motives connected with “active” holidays play more importantly than ever before such as experiences and events, natural beauties, active holiday and sports activities, gastronomy, health reasons, national parks, state of ecological country, etc. This fact should be used in marketing campaign and presented by different promotion tools in order to attract new target groups and position Montenegro as a destination which provides a lot of possibilities for beautiful active holidays full of adventures, unforgettable experiences, etc.

It is also interesting to mention the fact that most of the tourists regularly practice some kind of sport activities such as swimming, hiking, biking, rafting, etc. during their vacation in Montenegro. The activities which are the most popular among the tourists are swimming and water sports, cycling, hiking and biking, skiing and winter sports, rafting, etc., which implies that these activities should be included in all segments of tourist offer.

Although the results of the survey have shown that tourists are generally satisfied with the quality of sports and health tourism offered in Montenegro, it seems that this potential is still not appropriately and completely valorized and that there is still a lot of space for future improvement. In that sense, it is necessary to create main centers for sports and health tourism which will be the main spots which

will attract this kind of tourists. According to some authors [16, 17], special accent should be put on:

- Ulcinj should be given priority in the future having in mind the richness of natural factors for the development of health tourism such as Mediterranean-Adriatic climate, mineral water sources, sea salt, wellness of sand, and rich plant ecosystems. It is important to mention that in 1992 by the order of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Ulcinj was declared as a “Spa and Climate Health Resort.” The sea temperature makes the optimal bathing possibilities in the seawater about 6 months, from May to October. The water clarity in the summer is as much as 38 m, and on the sea in front of Ulcinj the highest water transparency in the Adriatic Sea is measured at 56 m. The long healing factors are sand on the beaches, which is very clean, with unusually fine small particles; there is not even the slightest admixture of soil, sludge, organic materials, etc. According to the chemical composition of Ulcinj sand, there are about 30 mineral substances that are biologically very active. It contains mild radioactivity which makes it very suitable for medical applications, especially in the case of diseases of the organs of movement and spine, rheumatism, desmopathy, sciatica, as well as conditions after injuries to these organs. The sulfur water that springs along the sea on the “female” beach has “miraculous” medicinal properties, and according to legends and stories, it has beneficial effects especially for women who do not have children. By mineral composition, the water is thus very rich. Mineral mud extends around the basin of the Ulcinj saltpan, about 2 km from the sea. Scientific tests of this mud confirm that it has one of the best qualities on the Adriatic. Untreated seaweed from the sea saltwater pool in Ulcinj has a “concentrated sea” effect, which is suitable for the treatment of rheumatism and diseases of the organs for movement. All these natural factors can rarely be found in one place, thus making this a unique place.
- Igalo is a place which should be valorized as a center of modern therapy, thalassotherapy, rehabilitation, prevention, and recreation. In order to reach this, it is necessary to undertake some measures such as modernization of existing centers and creation of new ones, providing additional values for consumers of services, modernization of traffic and communal infrastructure, realization of promotional activities focused on specific target groups, etc. Near the mouth of the Sutorina River to the sea, along the sea shore, there are several sources of mineral water, four of which are located. These mineral waters are based on chloride and muriatic, and according to the German classification, this mineral water belongs to the group of sodium chloride waters. It can be used in the treatment of various diseases, such as hypoacidities, dyskinesia, gallbladder disease, chronic constipation, and slow peristalsis. It is also used in the form of aerosols in respiratory tract diseases. Thanks to the healing sea mud, Igalo has developed into the largest centers in former Yugoslavia and one of the largest in Europe. This mud has pronounced hypersensitive, respiratory, and analgesic effects and is used in the treatment of many diseases, primarily those related to rheumatism.
- Prčanj in which there is already a center for the rehabilitation of children with asthmatic diseases should be further valorized in this direction. In order to reach this, it should provide additional capacities, modernize the existing ones, provide more diversified services, etc. It should definitely include Vrmac in order to reach the combination of medical and recreational contents on the route between sea and the mountains which would give this center a completely new quality.

- Risan, which is already affirmed as a classical health resort, needs to be modernized and further specialized in order to attract a larger number of different target groups.
- Tivat should also be considered as a new health center given the fact that sites Solila and Bigova, as well as the assumptions about the existence of mineral water, are present, etc.

Having on mind that all these places are situated at the seaside, they provide perfect conditions for practicing different sports activities such as swimming, water sports, tennis, golf, sports games, extreme sports activities, etc. The additional investment in infrastructure especially sports facilities would significantly improve the quality of tourist offer and the level of satisfaction of tourists.

Except in the coastal area, health and recreation centers should be developed in the continental and the mountainous parts of Montenegro, for example, on Orjen and Lovcen, as well as in lower altitude zones of Durmitor, Bjelasica, Komovi, and Prokletije. Having on mind natural beauties in this part of Montenegro which includes high mountains; national parks Durmitor, Lake Skadar, Lovćen, Biogradska Gora, and Prokletije and many parks of nature, beautiful forests, and lakes; deep and wild mountain rivers, among which the most famous one is Tara, “the tear of Europe” with the longest canyon in Europe and the second longest in the world; and Biogradska Gora, one of the three virgin forests in Europe, etc., it is clear that all these places provide a lot of opportunities for different kinds of sports activities such as hiking and biking, extreme sports, rafting, kayaking, etc.

It is also important to mention the fact that except for the already mentioned centers, the quality of other capacities in Montenegro should be further improved by the introduction of different programs such as wellness; spa; recreation programs such as massages, saunas, fitness, and yoga; weight loss programs; etc. In that sense, building fitness wellness centers is no longer a factor of comparative advantage, but a necessary prerequisite for competitiveness on the market and the key factor for the extension of the tourist season itself [18].

4. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to identify the main internal strengths and weaknesses of Montenegro, as well as external opportunities and threats that may have influence of its future development as sports and health tourist destination. The analyses of the results of the survey and their appropriate interpretation in combination with analysis of trends and perspectives on international tourism market led to preliminary conclusions related to positioning of Montenegro as sports and health tourism destination.

The general conclusion is that Montenegro has extremely valuable natural resources and potentials for development of sports and health tourism, as well as that all trends and perspectives on international tourism market will lead to the expansion of these types of tourism in the future. But, it also may be concluded that although natural resources are very important for development of sports and health tourism, they are neither sufficient nor the only resource of its future development—there is still a lot of work that should be done in the future from many different points of view. Because of that, it should work very intensively on continuous improvement of quality of these types of tourism and their promotion which could contribute not only to solving many problems of the destination such

as seasonality, distribution of tourists regarding place and time, tourism overcome, etc. but to its better positioning as high-quality sports and health tourism destination on international market as well.

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