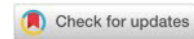


SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WITHIN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA UNTIL 2030

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Abstract: Within the framework of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 as an act of strategic planning of the Republic of Croatia for this decade, the following vision of the :recognizable identity and culture, a country with preserved resources, quality living conditions and equal opportunities for everyone. Economic and social development in balance with nature, envisaged within the defined four development directions, will create opportunities for current and future generations, whereby people will be at the center of all investments: – sustainable economy and society, – strengthening resistance to crises, – green and digital transition, – balanced regional development. The development direction “Sustainable economy and society” will contribute to policies aimed at achieving four strategic goals, and within the established strategic goal 1. “Competitive and innovative economy” as priority area 4.

Keywords: Croatia, Sustainable tourism, National Strategy
Field: Social Sciences

1. INTRODUCTION

“Development of sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism” is listed. The priorities of public policy, which will contribute to the development of sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism, are highlighted as follows: - encouraging investment in sustainable, low-carbon tourism development; - increasing the multiplier effects of tourism in the fields of agriculture, digitalization, transport, energy and environment, and sports and creative industries; - development of functional and sustainable tourist regions for the sake of a complete tourist experience and extension of the season through investments in public tourist infrastructure and promotion; - integral management of destinations in order to find suitable specializations, offer additional content and extend the season; - tourism valorization and presentation of cultural and natural heritage, gastronomic and oenological offers; – transition towards niches with higher added value, with an emphasis on increasing the quality of the offer, digitization, innovation and increasing the offer of high-quality accommodation capacities; - removing administrative obstacles and improving the availability of public infrastructure for the realization of investments in tourism; – positioning towards new and large, fast-growing global broadcasting markets; - promoting Croatia as a safe and healthy destination that offers high-quality and diverse tourist services

2. TOURISM IN THE WORLD

Tourism is a global phenomenon, and the development of sustainable tourism in Croatia must also be seen in the context of trends in the tourism market with the aim of increasing competitiveness and creating a stimulating tourism policy, taking into account the experiences of other comparable countries and adapting them to the specifics of Croatia.

Trends in tourism

The future directions of Croatian tourism development are also determined by trends in the global tourism market. Among the many short-term and long-term trends, those related to sustainable and affordable tourism, digitization of business, and demographic changes stand out. Modern consumers want to get information quickly, they seek information from trusted sources, including online communities, they want a personalized experience, but they fear the loss of privacy. Safety is at stake as well as mental and physical well-being and stress and anxiety relief products.

Consumers want more flexibility, and access to high-speed Internet and technological advances

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allow them to work outside the office. They want flexible, economical and alternative means of transportation. Environmental concerns are growing and eco-anxiety is reorienting them towards sustainable product choices for a guilt-free shopping experience. Also, the population's awareness of the need for sustainable tourism development is growing. According to the European Commission survey conducted on a representative sample of citizens of 27 countries (European Commission, 2021), of the European Union regarding their attitudes toward travel, 82% of EU citizens believe that they are ready to change some of their travel habits in order to travel more sustainably. For example, they tend to consume local products on vacation (55%), reduce waste during vacation (48%), travel outside the tourist season (42%) and travel to less visited destinations (41%).

The ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism

A third of respondents are willing to pay more for the protection of the natural environment (35%) or for the benefit of the local community (33%). Also, respondents are ready to choose transportation that respects the environmental impact (36%), reduce water consumption on vacation (35%) or contribute to carbon offset activities such as planting trees (34%). At the same time, women are somewhat more inclined to change their habits than men. Also, younger respondents are more willing to change their travel habits in the direction of sustainability compared to older respondents. The conclusion of the UNWTO/PATA forum on tourism trends held in 2018 is that sustainability is the core of tourism development until 2030. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018), The principles of sustainable tourism development refer to the ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and it is important to establish an appropriate balance between these three dimensions in order to guarantee its long-term sustainability. The paradigm of sustainable development of tourism therefore appears as a response to the challenges arising from human action on the environment. Global climate change is of great concern to scientists, experts and the general population. A survey conducted in 2020 showed that 37% of more than 20,000 respondents believe that climate change is the most worrying environmental issue facing the world. (Statista, Environmental pollution worldwide, 2021)

The negative effects of tourism on the environment

At the UN's COP 26 conference on climate change in 2021, the Glasgow Declaration was adopted: committing to a decade of climate action in tourism. The declaration provides guidelines for a 50% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions as soon as possible by 2050. Recommendations for the Transition to a Green Travel and Tourism Economy (World Tourism Organization (2021) were adopted at the G20 meeting of tourism ministers in 2021 in Italy. The interaction between tourism and climate change is very pronounced. On the one hand, the climate is an important factor in the development of tourism and the attractiveness of a tourist destination. Therefore, stakeholders in tourism are aware of the importance of the preserved environment and climate for the long-term development of tourism. On the other hand, tourism that is not based on the postulates of sustainability has a significant negative effect on the climate and the environment, since it contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases that cause global warming. Tourism is responsible for about 8% of total CO emissions (Lenzen, M., Sun, Y., Faturay, F., Ting, Y., Geschke, A., Malik, A. (2018). The biggest generator of carbon emissions is traffic. It was found that in 2016, tourism-related traffic caused 5% of global carbon emissions, and it is predicted that CO₂ emissions from tourism-related traffic will increase and represent 5.3% of all human-caused emissions in the world in 2030.

Based on the fact that tourism represents a significant lever of economic development in the Republic of Croatia, it is necessary to invest efforts to minimize the negative effects of tourism on the environment, preserve resources for tourism development, and the quality of life of future generations. The state of the environment is negatively affected by over-tourism, which the UNWTO defines as tourism that negatively affects the perceived quality of life of the local population and/or the quality of visitors' experience in a certain destination or some of its parts. Excessive tourism presents a challenge to the management of tourist destinations. It is the result of urbanization, economic development, lower transport costs, easier travel, and a growing middle class in advanced and developing economies, which have turned cities into increasingly popular travel destinations. The time to come will be marked by the growth of the world population, the aging of the population, migration, and marked urbanization. At the global level, the trend of population growth is noticeable. According to data from the United Nations, there were 7.7 billion inhabitants in the world in 2019. (United Nations, 2019)

By 2030, the population is expected to grow by 10%, and by 2050 by 26%, when there will be 9.7 billion inhabitants. Along with the increase in the population, the trends of migration and urbanization are noticeable. Changes in the number of inhabitants will reflect economic growth and development, and, in

addition to tourism demand, will also significantly affect the labor market. This can be a significant limiting factor for tourism development in countries facing population decline and emigration

Changes in the age structure of the population

Changes in the age structure of the population with a pronounced trend of population aging are especially significant for tourism in the Republic of Croatia. According to the data of the United Nations, in 2020 there were about 727 million people aged 65 or over living in the world. (United Nations, 2020) It is expected that this number will more than double by 2050 and reach over 1.5 billion people, i.e. that the share of elderly people in the global population will increase from 9.3% in 2020 to 16% in 2050, and by the middle of the century, every sixth person in the world will be 65 years old or older. Demographic changes are reflected in the number and structure of generational groups. As younger generations enter the labor market, there will be long-term changes in lifestyle and travel. Due to changes in the household structure, i.e. the growing number of single households, an increase in the number of independent (solo) and multi-generational trips has been observed at the global level.

Independent travel accounted for 11% of the tourist market in 2019, with women representing 84% (Solo Travel Statistics, 2021), while until 2016 they were considered a market niche. Taking into account the trends caused by demographic changes, and especially the trend of population aging, it is necessary to develop special forms of tourism adapted to the needs of different demographic segments, with a special emphasis on health tourism, for which Croatia has available resources. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism promotes responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism, therefore, UNWTO has also offered a reference framework for interventions, tools, and resources that are needed to provide services and manage accessible tourism. Tourism accessible to all refers to all people who, regardless of their life circumstances (for example, families with small children, young students, and elderly people), have the right to access tourist experiences. The goal is to encourage key stakeholders in tourism to implement measures that will result in greater participation of different groups of people in tourism, including people with disabilities. Tourist destinations that will implement these measures and develop a tourism offer that will improve the tourist experience of all groups of tourists, and will also improve the quality of life of its residents. The trend of sustainable, inclusive, and accessible tourism, known as tourism for all will be the backbone development of tourism in the coming period.

3. ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

Accessible tourism enables people with specific access requirements (respecting mobility, sight, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access) to function independently, fairly and with dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products and services. This applies to all people, including those traveling with children in strollers, people with disabilities and the elderly. (Darcy, S., & Dickson, T. J. (2009). The size of the market for persons with disabilities is evidenced by the following data: (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO,2020). 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, by 2050 1 in 4 people living in Europe could be 65 or older, and more than 46% of elderly people (over 60) already have a disability, travelers with disabilities usually travel with 2 to 3 people, 70% of people with disabilities in the European Union have the financial and physical means to travel, resulting in the market potential of people with disabilities in the European Union of more than 80 million people (130 million if the elderly and accompanying persons are added). Today, tourism is strongly influenced by the trend of digitization of business. The technology and telecommunications industry is advancing at a high speed, which is also reflected in tourism. Devices are becoming increasingly connected and supported by modern technological solutions such as artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and 5G network. Information technology (IT) has become part of everyday life, it has changed the way of living, working and spending free time. Erasing the boundaries between time devoted to work and rest, as well as the application of modern communication technologies, enable busy travelers to perform work in places far from their place of residence and work. In the future, tourists will have different needs and desires that they will satisfy in specific ways and shape different trends. The price will be personalized experiences, improvement of physical and mental health, authentic products and cultures. Life circumstances are changing, the boundaries between the time needed for study, work and rest are being erased. The trend of sharing economy and community living is expected to grow. Space for living, studying and working will be shared. Technology will enable remote work and collaboration, as well as flexible working hours. Virtual and augmented reality, autonomous transport, artificial intelligence and biometric technology will be applied in tourism and the entertainment industry. Social media will still be a source of travel inspiration.

An individualized approach to products and services will be required. Market segmentation will be based on lifestyles rather than demographic variables, as strict boundaries between genders, age or ethnicity will be lost.

4. CONCLUSION

Modern technological solutions and digital transformation are changing the way tourist destinations and business entities in tourism are managed and are becoming a means by which destinations will be positioned as smart destinations. Participants on the supply side in the future should incorporate new technological solutions into their operations and digitize their operations in order to ensure competitiveness and sustainable development. It is necessary to develop new tourist products, that is, to provide new experiences that will also include the application of digital technologies, for example augmented and virtual reality. Destinations should become smart and sustainable, accessible to everyone, and tourist products should provide tourists with an unforgettable personalized and authentic tourist experience. The use of digitization in tourism as a tool that helps in making business decisions is of particular importance. Digitization facilitates the creation of a large amount of publicly available data on tourist movements, habits and activities of tourists, which creates prerequisites for the use of business intelligence systems in predicting future demand for their services. The above contributes to the optimal use of resources, higher productivity and ultimately a better user experience. This trend of data use is driven by the collection of data on indicators at the national level, but also the availability and exchange of data at the EU level. The trends in the use of IT tools are also influenced by the public administration through the development of e-services that enable entrepreneurs to communicate more easily and quickly with the public administration in business. In addition, the development of e-tools in public administration provides an insight into the clear benefits that entrepreneurs have from digitization and the possibility of stimulating research and development and building a network of stakeholders outside of tourism who participate in value chains with the aim of their successful cooperation. The use of new technologies will provide Croatian entrepreneurs with the opportunity to be part of the unique Digital Single Market and Europe as a tourist destination. Taking into account the aforementioned trends, Croatia can develop sustainable tourism that will contribute to the overall economic development of the country.

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