

Special Interest Tourism with Exceptional Emphasis on Istrian Region and Kolubara District¹

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Abstract

Tourism is included among the most dynamic and propulsive activities, with complex and multiple effects, which supplies it with a strong driving function in a wide range of activities and includes it more and more among the priorities of economic development of numerous receptive countries and their particular parts.

Wealth, preservation and the appeal of natural resources, the large number of traditional agricultural households, the gradual increase in domestic population living standard, as well as the increasing interest of international market for performances of special interest tourism, make the solid framework for the development of this branch of tourism in Serbia, where there are the required conditions. The development of other accompanying activities is emphasized also in order to enrich the content that this particular branch of tourism has to offer.

With particular retrospective on conditions in Croatia and Serbia, the intention of the authors in this paper is to answer some developmental questions of tourism progress, depending on natural, economic and social facts, recognition of geographic aspects of terrain and determination by human factor in enhancing special interest tourism with all its following content, through its work and activities.

Key words: *special interest tourism, comparative analysis, market, accommodation capacities, education*

JEL Classification: L83

Introduction

Based on key factors of success analysis, it is apparent that both destinations, Istrian Region in Croatia and Kolubara District in Serbia, have relatively good potential for developmental and international commercialization of special interest tourism product. The fact is, that this product is based on preserved natural resources, to the large extent to which both Croatia and Serbia are abundant, which enables them to define, develop and supply international market with attractive product palette of special tourism services.

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Natural and Economic Resources of Special Interest Tourism in Istrian Region and Kolubara District

Istrian Region by its geographic and natural landmarks has a significant advantage in special interest tourism development. Numerous data prove Istrian precedence in quality tourist offer, as well as in tourist attendance. However, Kolubara District has its benefits for the development of various types of tourism, and the comparative review of main characteristics of both regions shows which natural features and potential developmental capacities they hold.

Table 1. Main characteristics of Istrian Region and Kolubara District

Istrian Region, Croatia	Kolubara District, Serbia
Relief : 0 – 1300 m altitude	75-980 m altitude
Land coverage: 43% forests, 30% agriculture areas, 23% pasture land, 4% artificially made land	64.66% agriculture areas, 23.81% forests, other 8,53%
Climate: mediterranean, sub-mediterranean, continental, mild mountain climate	Mild continental
Water courses of: Dragonja, Mirna, Pazincica, Boljuncica, Rasa	Kolubara, Jablanica, Obnica, Gradac, Ljig, Tamnava, Ljubostinja, Ljubovidja, Ub, Bukovska reka, Crna reka, Kozlice, Krcmarska reka, Crna reka, Kamenica, Slavkovska reka, Lepenica, Toplica, Ribnica
Lakes/accumulations: Butoniga, Boljuncica	Pocibrava/Valjevo; Ocaga/Lazarevac, Kljuch raja/Mionica
Water protection regime: around 70% of Istrian Region area	On territory of Republic of Serbia water (flood) protection is covered on 126 4000 ha
Nature conservation area: 7,8% of Istrian Region area	Around 0.41% Kolubara District area
Nature conservation area including suggested areas: 20% of Istrian Region	-
Water supply: around 95%	About 65 % of households in Kolubara District is connected to water supply line
Water drain: 45 – 65%	about 34 % is connected to sewer system
Organized garbage collection: over 90%, with 7 official depots	above 90%, formal and informal depots
Dry land area: 2 822 km ² (5% Rep.Cro)	3,264 km ²
Total of residents (population census 2001.): 206 344 (4,65% Rep. Cro)	250755 according to 2002 population census (3.34% RS)
GDP/ resident(€): over 7000 (approximately 133% of Rep. of Croatia average	4002.2 € (2007)
Unemployment (2004.): 8,4% (45% RC)	(2008) 1.97%
Economic sector participate % of income: Refining industry: 34%, Trade: 32%; Hotels, Restaurants: 10%; Engineering: 7%; Business services: 5%; Other: 7%	Participation of economy branches in Gross Domestic Product in Rep. Serbia (2008): Agriculture 11.8%, Excavation of minerals and stone 1.51%, Refining industry 15.83%, Electricity, gas and water production 3.03%, Engineering 3.61%, Whole and retail sale 13.62%, Hotels and restaurants 0.77%, Traffic, storage and networking 16.44%, Financial procurement 4.63%, Real estate business 14.12%, Other services 14.65%
Tourist capacities: about 232 000 beds (50% camps)	(2008.) around 3295 beds (around 25% of capacities are in country households)

Source: Regional operational program of Istrian Region, Republic of Serbia, Institute of Statistics, 2008

In addition to the developmental potential, both locations represent attractive relief with water areas, mountains, caves, gauges, and other natural features, as it is shown in the previous table.

Table 2. Natural features and beauties

Istrian Region, Croatia	Kolubara District Serbia
Natural rarities and beauties	Walk paths, bike trails, equestrian centers, paragliding, free climbing tracks, motor-cross tracks, sightseeing gouges
Kotlovi – trenches made by water in river basin	
Mlini – village with preserved water mill	
Pazinski i Zarečki krov – lake-like drenches in river bed of Pazincica	
Waterfall sopot	
St. Stjepan medical water spring	
Artificial lake Botoniga	
Conserved parts of nature:	Natural resrvation (on Divcibari): Crna river, Čalac brook, Zabalac iand Vražji vir
○ Special natural reservation of forest vegetation Motovun forest, Oprtalj	
○ Geomorfological monument to nature Vela draga under the Ucka mountain	
○ Botanical monument to nature, cypress tree in Kascerga	
○ Botanical monument to nature , four pine trees in Karojba	
○ Significant landscape Gracisce-Pican	
○ Significant landscape, scenery around Istrian Toplica, Oprtalj	
○ Significant landscape, Pazin creek, Pazin	
Geomorphological appearance relief:	
Mountain chain Cicarija with highest point Planik 1272m	Mountains: Suvobor, Maljen, Rajac, Divcibare
Mountain chain Ucka with highest points Poklon and Vojak 1396m	
Sinking creeks: Raspor- deepest in Istria 365m, Krkuz, Gragorincici	
Caves: Noglanska cave, Fetistin kingdom, Piskavica, 1036m long	
Gouges: Marfan - 273m deep, 2045m long, Pazin	Ribnicka cave, Mokra cave, cave “Vrelo”, each of them is characterized by extraordinary attractiveness- from rare species of bats, rich cave jewelry and great potential for fishing tourism (carp and trout).
Caves: Novacka 445m long, 170m deep, Radota 268m, selina 182m	
Game: rabbit,partridge,roe deer,wild boar	Birds-pheasant,partridge,turtle dove, wild pigeon,woodcock,grey heron,wild goose, wild duck,red-breasted marganser etc. Mamals: roe deer, wild boar, european deer, fallow deer, rabbit, squirell, grey doormouse, badger, golden mink, wild cat, skunk.

Table 2 (cont.)

Autochthonus kinds of domestic animals: Istrian cow, goat, pramenka sheep, donkey, Istrian cattle - driver dog	Permanently protected species- weasel,ermine,long legged buzzer,otter,hawk,buzzard,sparrow hawk, cuckoo, woodpecker, starling, raven, woodcock, haggard, singing birds.
Rare plants: slavonian oak, european ash, holm oak	Conifers,new wood-lands, slavonian oak, lime-tree, european ash, acacia
Truffles-mushrooms	Raspberry, strawberry, plum, honey, blackberry, cheese, cream - so called kajmak

Source: Regional operational program of Istrian Region, p. 24, Republic of Serbia, Institute of Statistics, 2008

Segments of Product

Starting with the fact that the special interest product is made up of a large number of market niches, the easiest way to segregate it is as follows:

1. Mild or “soft” activities that include camping, hiking, bike riding, rafting, 4x4 driving, in-nature activities, horse riding, fishing, etc. Some of these activities, for example animal chase, are being largely commercialized in Istria and Serbia, while some are being included in maps and catalogues of specialized operators, more in Istria than in Kolubara District. It is good to keep in mind that particular niches of special interest products can represent an included part of product group “Mountains and Lakes “ as additional activities while vacationing. Rich offer of activities represents a base for development of these products throughout the year, not only during high season;
2. Rough or “hard” activities, that refer to canoeing or kayaking down river streams, exploring canyons, caves, mountain biking, cross country skiing, alpinism, free climbing, paragliding, jeep safari and similar. All of these activities can, in the long run, be presented as independent products on the market, particularly because their organization and popularization need more investment in promotion, standard formation and similar.
3. Cultural resources activities, gastro interests, monastery tours, places of importance heritage tours, archeological journeys and similar;
4. Market – special interest products ought to be introduced to the domestic market, as well as to foreign emissive markets of special interest like Germany, Great Britain, France, Netherlands, Italy, etc.

Competitive Strategy of Special Interest Tourism Development in Serbia

Taking into consideration the complexity of the product, it is hard to determine a unique developmental strategy. Each created, professional destination, with its managing company, will determine its own competitive strategy. As Serbia is taking smaller steps in tourism supply and in its representation on foreign markets, in comparison to Istria, it must especially focus on these production segments which accompanied by reasonable prices and low costs make its biggest potential. On the other hand, Serbia must directly approach communication among its strategic benefits with a view to the special interest product, even more because of the fact that these products’ development and their international popularization do not require large financial investment. Although the special interest product is of mostly seasonal character, vast resource base provides Serbia with the possibility of organizing activities in this domain, throughout the year.

Aiming at faster popularization of special interest product, it is necessary to stimulate the development of destination management companies that have programs for preparation and development of different product segments.

Special interest products are usually promoted by specialized brochures of foreign tour-operators, presentations on specialized fairs and especially by direct marketing and internet. To enhance international promotion of this product in Serbia, special internet platforms should be established, connected to powerful international internet providers.

Table 3. Facilities and accommodation capacities in Istrian Rehion (Croatia)

Tourism type	Number	Capacity
Accommodation facilities in rural area		
Agro-tourism	584	6000 beds
Residential	556	2230 beds
Hotels	3	224 beds
camps	1	30 places
Sport-adventure		
Walking paths	10	100 km
Bike trails	13	1360 km
Equestrian centers and clubs	8	
Paragliding	9	
Free climbing spots	11	
Motor-cross i enduro trails	2	
Sightseeing gouges and caves	3	
Health tourism hotels	1	360 beds
Fishing and animal chasing	46	240000 ha
Cultural-Religious	83	
Gastronomy facilities		
Catering facilities in rural area	626	62600 chairs
Paths of wine	4	
Paths of olive oil	7	
Paths of honey	8	

Table 4. Facilities and accommodation in Kolubara District

Kolubara District		
Tourism type	Number	Capacity
Agro-tourism	92	828 beds
Residential	-	-
Hotels	17	1493 beds
camps	1	50 beds
Sport-adventure	1	
Walking paths	5	
Bike trails	1	
Equestrian centers and clubs	-	
Paragliding	1	
Free climbing spots	-	
Motor- cross trails	-	
Sightseeing gouges	6	
Natural reservation (Divčibare): Crna reka, Čalački potok, Zabalac i Vražji vir	-	
Mountain tracks: Rajac i Divčibare	3	
Health tourism	1	Hotel Vrujci (banquet hall with 212 seats and restaurant hall with 140 seats)

Table 4 (cont.)

Fishing and animal chase	1 organized hunting ground on Valjevska Kamenica, area 69.630ha, fishing organized on Valjevska Kamenica and Mionica	-
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Accommodation facilities are essential and characteristic features of tourism area, which implies that their space and quality to a considerable extent determine the range of tourism circulation; their types, forms and quality directly affect the types and forms of tourism and therefore tourism's economy effects. In continental Istria the possibilities of hotel, camp, private accommodation and family agricultural households prevail. In Kolubara District the domestic country tourism is developed, which could contribute to tourism development of that particular part of Serbia in general, but it is still being conducted slowly and poorly organized.

Table 5. Forms of rural tourism in Istrian Region and Kolubara District

Istrian Region	Kolubara District
Agro-tourism	Country tourism
Residential and local tourism	Residential and local tourism
Sport and adventure tourism	Sport and adventure tourism
Health tourism	Health tourism
Cultural and religious tourism	Cultural and religious tourism
Gastronomy tourism	Ethno and Ecology Tourism

Competitive Disadvantages of Products

The following tables review the competitive disadvantages of special interest tourism, in prospective of tourist companies and their rivalry, requests of demand, offer and supply sector and production factors.

Tourist companies and rivalry

Identified short-comings	Connectivity to general competition programs	Priority
Lack of accommodation capacities of adequate quality, especially in rural and mountain regions of Serbia	Improvement and development of accommodation system	High
Accommodation capacities do not include complementary activities and services in connection with special interest product	Improvement and development of accommodation system	Very high
Lack of categorisation system of alternative accommodation capacities	Improvement and development of accommodation system	High
Lack of cooperation and association between accommodation sector and others tourism sectors.	Improvement and development of accommodation system	Very high
Lack of strategic directions and investments in accommodation capacities for special interest product development	Improvement and development of accommodation system	Very high

Requests of Demand

Identified shortcomings	Connectivity to general competition programs	Priority
Lack of diversification and specialization of supply, activities and services of special interest product	Development of tourism information system	Very high
Lack of image and positioning in connection with special interest product development for both domestic and international demand.	Development of tourism information system	Very high
Lack of specific information about special interest activities and services.	Development of tourism information system	Very high
Tourist demand is based on domestic market, lacking in management and promotion of special interest product.	Tourism system of quality. Tourism information system development Additional tourist supply (trade, gastronomy, catering, travel agencies etc.)	High
Low client sophistication.	Tourism system of quality	High

Supply and support sector

Identified short-comings	Connectivity to general competition programs	Priority
Insufficiently specialized catering supply, restaurants with relatively low supply of medium and low quality.	Development of Additional tourist supply (trade, gastronomy, catering, travel agencies etc.)	High
Lack of fun and leisure activities in most areas important for tourism of special interests development.	Destination management implementation	High
Lack of specialized managing companies and product organizers, special interest activities and packages for domestic and foreign markets.	Destination management implementation Development of Additional tourist supply (trade, gastronomy, catering, travel agencies etc.)	Very high
Lack of organization, management, packaging and popularization of product	Destination management implementation	Very high
Low level of local attractions exploitation, events and similar, for cause of tourism, especially as support to special interest product, and lack of strategic direction for it's further improvement and growth	Development of Additional tourist supply (trade, gastronomy, catering, travel agencies etc.)	High
Lack of specialized markets of local products and local tradition (food, souvenirs, hand-made products etc.	Development of Additional tourist supply (trade, gastronomy, catering, travel agencies etc.)	High

Production factors

Identified short-comings	Connectivity to general competition programa	Priority
Low road accessibility and poorly maintained roads are big problem in special interest product development, especially in rural and mountain parts of Serbia.	Accessibility and admission	Very high
Lack of river infrastructure on Sava and Danube as special interest product support.	Accessibility and admission	Very high
Low quality of public, railway and taxi transport.	Educational and improvement programme	Very high
Lack of specialized guidance in special interest product development.	City and municipality plans referring to environment, urban aesthetics, cultural and natural heritage, attractions, equipment and others.	Very high
Low exploitation of cultural and natural resources in development of special interest product.	City and municipality plans referring to environment, urban aesthetics, cultural and natural heritage, attractions, equipment and others. Road information and notation system	High
Low quality of systems for preservation, protection and maintenance of cultural and natural resources	City and municipality plans referring to environment, urban aesthetics, cultural and natural heritage, attractions, equipment and others	High

Models of Development

Considering special interest product as mainly reposing on natural resources preservation, both in Istrian Region and Kolubara District, there is a big chance for this product to develop, define itself and offer itself to the international market.

Special interest product can develop on low cost strategy in the medium term, with small investments and reasonable prices, considering wealth of resources.

In medium and long term, Serbia must raise general competitiveness level in the field of infrastructure development, particularly road accessibility, which opens numerous opportunities for special interests products development, which characterizes the majority of even vaguely developed tourist countries.

Besides, both regions have traditional and cultural heritage and conditions that facilitates them to attract tourist's interest, which enables tourists, while on vacation, to use their leisure time to get to know the people and the surroundings where they temporarily reside in (to see the museums, galleries, special collections and similar). Cultural manifestations also have a strong ability to attract tourists, supplying with enrichment of contents, higher value to an area or a place and enable higher cost budget. Naturally, high emphasis is put on distinguished conditions for rural tourism development in agro-tourism oasis of Istria and Kolubara.

The global market potential of special interest product significantly overcomes the possibilities of Serbia and Istria to develop and popularize this product, exceptionally in the short and medium term. Therefore, intensifying global communication of this product with present global internet portals is of great importance. Creation of internet portals that are sale oriented

followed by accompanying popularization steps and previous unification of tourist offer of special interest tourism will accelerate its commercialization.

Conclusion

The development and popularization of special interests do not require high investment. Therefore, the emphasis is on management of activities that are much less favored in Istrian Region and Kolubara District. Following this context, the developmental model of this product should be based on following *activities*:

1. Establishing the responsibility and coordination for the development and commercialization of special interest tourism is of great importance, particularly because current action of individual product associations is petty and broken down and lacking the joint effort to realize serious commercialization in particular region or whole country.
2. Identification and creation of unique data base of activity organizations and special interest supply;
3. Creation of the greatest world's tour-operators data base in the field of special interests;
4. Support and financial stimulation for private personae when forming new companies for destination management;
5. Additional regulation of activities description for these companies, that make the most important link in the chain of product value;
6. Drawing initiative for general preservation and sustainable development of mountains, rivers and lakes, together with successive formation of infrastructure favorable for special interests development;
7. Programs of incorporation of specialized and scientific workers and education of tourist guides for various cultural and scientific contents in the field of this product;
8. Formation of special quality systems in the field of special interest products;
9. Seminary organization by qualified companies in all tourism clusters;
10. Organization of special tours for those engaged in this field;
11. Support of specialized magazines and publication launching in this field;
12. Educational programs for specialized guides;
13. Consumer protection program and other competitiveness programs in general.

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Turismul în scopuri speciale cu accent deosebit pe regiunea Istriana și districtul Kolubara

Rezumat

Turismul este inclus printre activitățile cele mai dinamice și propulsatoare, având efecte complexe și multiple, ceea ce îi conferă un rol determinant într-o gamă largă de activități și îl include din ce în ce mai mult între prioritățile dezvoltării economice a numeroase țări receptive și a anumitor zone ale lor.

Bogăția, conservarea și calitatea resurselor naturale, numărul mare de gospodării agricole tradiționale, creșterea treptată a standardelor de trai ale populației pe plan intern, precum și creșterea interesului pieței internaționale pentru turismul în scopuri speciale, constituie cadrul ferm al dezvoltării acestei ramuri a turismului în Serbia, unde există condițiile necesare. Dezvoltarea altor activități complementare este de asemenea accentuată pentru a îmbogăți conținutul acestei ramuri particulare pe care turismul o are de oferit.

În contextul condițiilor din Croația și Serbia, intenția autorilor acestui articol este de a răspunde unor întrebări legate de progresul turismului, în funcție de factorii naturali, economici și sociali, de cunoașterea aspectelor geografice ale terenului și implicarea factorului uman, prin munca și activitățile sale, în dezvoltarea turismului în scopuri speciale cu tot ceea ce presupune acesta.