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Preliminary communication

NAUTICAL TOURISM AS A KEY TOURIST PRODUCT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TOURISM IN SERBIA

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Abstract

Nautical tourism represents a significant segment of tourism in many destinations around the world, including in Serbia. This paper investigates the role of nautical tourism as a key tourist product in the context of improving tourism in Serbia. The goal of the research is to analyze the potential of nautical tourism in the country and identify key factors that can contribute to the development of this type of tourism. The focus is on the study of the tourist offer related to nautical tourism, including marinas, yachts, water sports and other related services. It also examines the economic and social impact of nautical tourism on the local community, as well as opportunities for generating income and employment. Through a detailed analysis of existing resources, infrastructure, market trends and tourist demand, the research aims to provide guidelines for development strategies for nautical tourism in Serbia, as well as identify potential challenges and opportunities. The research will focus on the analysis of tourism infrastructure and resources in Serbia that are key to the development of nautical tourism, such as rivers, lakes and coastal areas. In this way, the research will provide a comprehensive picture of the potential of Serbia as a nautical destination and identify areas that require additional investments and improvements.

Keywords: Nautical tourism, tourism product, improvement, Serbia.

JEL classification: L83

INTRODUCTION

Nautical tourism represents an important segment of tourism that is gaining more and more popularity in many destinations around the world. In this context, Serbia stands out as a country with great potential for the development of nautical tourism. Nautical tourism includes various activities such as sailing on rivers, lakes and coastal areas, sports sailing, fishing, diving and many other water activities. Serbia, with its rich natural resources, which include rivers, lakes and beautiful areas of water, provides an ideal basis for the development of nautical tourism.

What attracts people who are lovers of water, sailing and outdoor adventures is nautical tourism. This type of tourism allows visitors to explore beautiful coastal areas, visit islands and enjoy a variety of water activities. Nautical tourism can bring many benefits, including economic development, job creation and the promotion of cultural heritage associated with maritime traditions. The development of marinas and infrastructure for nautical tourism can have a positive impact on local communities, attracting tourists, investors and encouraging the development of the service sector.

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1. DEFINING NAUTICAL TOURISM

The beginnings of nautical tourism as a sport, recreational and entertainment activity date back to the 16th century with the organization of regattas along the Dutch canals. However, the development of nautical tourism as a modern form of tourist activity began three centuries later. Today, the basic services of nautical tourism include: (Đuranović, 2013)

1. Renting of space next to the landscaped coast, partially or fully protected, intended for accommodation of vessels and nautical tourists who stay on them,

2. Renting of vessels for rest and recreation, known as charter, cruising and the like, which enables tourists to independently explore the waters and coasts,

3. Services of skippers who lead and manage vessels, providing tourists with additional safety and experience during navigation,

4. Acceptance, custody and maintenance of vessels at sea and dry berths, providing safe space for parking and maintenance of ships,

5. Services of supplying sailors, including water, fuel, provisions, spare parts, equipment and other necessities that are necessary during navigation,

6. Arrangement and preparation of vessels, including cleaning, technical inspection and other activities that ensure a safe and functional ship,

7. Providing various information to sailors, such as weather forecasts, nautical guides and other information that is useful during the trip,

8. Sailing schools and training for skippers, enabling tourists to acquire the necessary skills for boat management and safe navigation,

9. Other tourist services that support nautical tourism, such as renting equipment for water activities (swimming, water skiing), umbrellas and sunbeds, organization of sports and cultural events, etc.

10. Supervision and control over providers of nautical and tourist services is carried out by competent institutions such as port authorities, coast guards, ministries of tourism, transport, finance and others, as well as tourist and other inspectors in accordance with regulations and their competences.

Nautical tourism is defined as a set of interrelationships and phenomena that result from traveling by water on different types of vessels, as well as the stay of tourists in certain locations along these waterways. This form of tourism is complex and includes various organized or independently organized tourist activities, where the basic content of the stay is driving boats of different sizes and staying on the shores for sports and recreational activities (Tomka et al. 1988).

Nautical tourism is a new tourism activity that, thanks to recreation and water sports activities, has been continuously and rapidly developing since the sixties of the 20th century (Pašković, 2020).

What makes nautical tourism unique is the presence of a vessel, which is a key element of a boater's tourist experience and distinguishes it from other activities that take place in the water, on or under its surface. The vessel itself, as the basic means of movement and research, forms the essence of nautical tourism, which can be seen in the root of the word "nautical", which comes from the Latin term "navis", which means ship. Other terms such as marine tourism, yachting tourism, sailing tourism, leisure boating and the like are often used in professional literature. In a broader sense, nautical tourism

is connected with seafaring, navigation and exploration of water expanses (Brčić, Orlandić, 2010).

Nautical tourism appeared at the end of the second millennium as a new form of tourist movements with a pronounced maritime component, and its development has recorded continuous growth from the very beginning. Nautical tourism is an economically significant and important form of tourist activity, it plays the role of a leader in the economic development of the localities where it occurs, and is sometimes called the nautical tourism industry (Obradović, Krklješ. 2019).

The main activities of nautical tourism include the provision of space rental services along the regulated coast for the accommodation of vessels and sailors, the rental of vessels for rest and recreation, skipper services, maintenance of vessels on the berth, supply of sailors, sailing schools and skipper training. The classification of the basic types of nautical tourism makes it possible to distinguish between types such as mobile, sailing, bathing, residential, sports, winter moored boats, excursion, fishing, cultural, health and ambient (Brčić, 2009).

According to the Law on Tourism of the Republic of Slovenia, "Nautical activity is the provision of services in reception and navigational facilities for nautical tourism, as well as the provision of other services for the needs of nautical tourism. Nautical tourism services are: reception; supply; keeping; rental; maintenance and repair of nautical tourism vessels; organizing sports motonautical activities on the water and tourist cruises; provision of other services for the needs of nautical tourism" ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 36/2009, 88/2010, 99/2011 - other laws and 93/2012).

2. NAUTICAL TOURISM PRODUCT

Nautical tourism is recognized and defined in the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2016-2025. as one of the tourist products of Serbia. It belongs to the group of key products for the following 11 tourist destinations: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Fruška gora, Sremski Karlovci, Subotica, Palić, Potisje, Gornje Podunavlje with Bačka canals, Donje, Podunavlje and Danube.

According to the current Act on Tourism (Act on Tourism, Sl. Glasnik RS, No. 17/2019), a tourist product is defined as "a set of interdependent elements which in practice is organized as a special value chain, consisting of material products and services, natural values and cultural assets, tourist attractions, tourist superstructure and tourist infrastructure".

It is, therefore, a complex product, which includes a large number of elements and subjects. The tourism product is partly determined by the natural and cultural assets that are represented in the given destination, it is shaped to a significant extent by the actions of the Government and local authorities, which through planning documents (Tourism Development Strategy, Strategic Master Plan, Strategic Marketing Plan, Tourism Product Development Program, Tourism Development Program and Program of Promotional Activities) systematically direct the development of the tourism industry in domestic destinations, and its significant factor is represented by numerous and diverse hospitality facilities (Stojanović, Radović, 2017).

Hospitality facilities are independent business entities that provide accommodation, food and drink services to tourists, thus forming a tourism superstructure. The tourist product is a complex system that consists of natural and cultural assets, the actions of the government and local authorities, as well as various catering establishments. Hospitality

establishments, which provide accommodation, food and drink services, contribute to the tourist offer of the destination. The development of a tourist product requires the harmonization of functionality, quality and costs, with the aim of attracting tourists and realizing the expected profit (Ibidem).

Nautical tourism product in the scientific sense represents a set of services, resources and activities related to nautical tourism. This includes boat rentals, accommodation facilities, various marinas, water sports, educational programs, as well as other specific tourist services tailored to the nautical experience. The goal is to create an authentic and satisfying tourist product for nautical tourists, with a focus on their specific needs and interests.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF NAUTICAL TOURISM IN SERBIA

The offer of nautical tourism products is based on a network of river courses of almost 1,600 km, as well as on the strategic potential of the Danube, which in the last few years has become a tourist inland waterway (navigable along its entire length - 588 km through our country), towards which the global tourism demand is directed. (Milićević, Štetić, 2022).

As one of the world's trump cards for river tourism - an important road (Pan-European Corridor 7, the only inland waterway among the 10 Pan-European corridors), the course of the Danube is ideal for passenger traffic, primarily for tourist ships - cruise ships, but also for tourist recreational (individual) sailing. The chance for the development of this type of tourism lies in the fact that the Danube is a unique symbol of Europe, due to the diversity of cultures, peoples, languages, customs and nature, which makes it an authentic tourist destination in Europe. However, we should not ignore the destinations in the Sava river basin (it is navigable in its entire course through the RS – 204 km) and the Tisza, which have an international navigation regime, then the Drina, Velika Morava and Tamis, as well as the Danube-Tisza-Danube canal network. The navigational potential of the Sava and Danube rivers enables the establishment of all types of passenger lines, i.e. transit, intercity, suburban, urban and tourist-tour lines (<https://www.mto.gov.rs/vesti/1>).

After several decades, Serbia is turning to rivers in order to promote the development of water transport and the overall economic development of the country, which implies the construction of the missing nautical infrastructure. For these reasons, the Port Management Agency (AUL) launched the "Sail Serbia" Project, with the aim of further improving traffic on our rivers, through the construction of new piers and marinas, which will significantly increase the volume of water traffic and raise the visibility of Serbia's nautical potential in domestic and international frameworks.

Further activities to improve passenger water traffic in our country are based on the Memorandum of Understanding in the field of nautical tourism on inland waterways, which was signed by MTTT and AUL on September 8, 2021, and which recognizes the importance of investing in the renovation of existing and the construction of new nautical and accompanying infrastructure and superstructure as essential segments in the nautical offer of our country. This primarily refers to the completion of existing and the opening of new international passenger piers for cruise ships, as well as to the more intensive expansion of the network of marinas, piers and moorings for recreational (individual) vessels, which will complete the nautical offer of Serbia and enable the full use of the

tourist potential as Danuv as well as the Sava, which will, among other things, contribute to the development of local self-governments and increase the total income from tourism in Serbia (<https://www.mto.gov.rs>).

Nautical tourism in Serbia is accompanied by complementary content: (Ibidem)

- sports and recreational activities on rivers, canals and lakes
- event contents (of a sporting, cultural and other nature);
- complementary touristic values of the coast (various natural and cultural heritage)
 - thematic routes ("Route of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route" and "Fortresses on the Danube" etc.)
 - specialized gastronomic offer of the coast (e.g. fish farms, restaurants)
 - hunting and fishing areas

There are currently 8 international passenger ports in operation on the territory of the RS: Belgrade, Novi Sad, Smederevo, Golubac, Kostolac, Donji Milanovac, Kladovo and Sremska Mitrovica. Table 1 shows an overview of all cruise ship dockings according to locations in Serbia in the period for the first six months of 2023.

Table 1. Overview of cruise ship dockings by location in the period from January 1, 2023. until 31.05.2023.

International passenger terminal	No. docking	No. passengers
Beograd	88	11.283
Novi Sad	58	7.414
Smederevo	4	439
Golubac	19	2.442
Kostolac	0	0
Donji Milanovac	37	4.956
Kladovo	0	0
Sremska Mitrovica	1	74
TOTAL:	207	26.608

Source: <https://www.aul.gov.rs/>

Table 2 shows the complete current nautical tourism traffic since the opening of the nautical season. As of May 31, 2023, the Port Management Agency recorded an increase in the number of arrivals by 4.6% and an increase in the number of passengers by 44% compared to the same period last year.

Table 2. Traffic in nautical tourism in Serbia

The name of the indicator	Unit of measure	Traffic in 2023.				
		I	II	III*	IV	V
Docking number	Number	/	/	26	127	207
Number of passengers	Number	/	/	3.416	16.064	26.608

* Nautical season is open 18.03.2023.

Source: <https://www.aul.gov.rs/>

In contrast to large vessels and organized navigation for a large number of tourists, modern seafaring is given a new feature by nautical tourism. The key emission markets of nautical tourism are: USA, Germany, France, Great Britain, Austria (Stanković, 2010).

4. BOATING AND CATERING FACILITIES OF NAUTICAL TOURISM

A nautical tourism vessel is a vessel with or without a motor, suitable for cruising on the sea, rivers, lakes and canals, for leisure, entertainment and recreation. There are six basic types of vessels in the world: tourist boat, yacht, sailboat, speedboat, boat and other vessels (Hrabovski-Tomić, 2008).

In the theoretical and conceptual sense, nautical tourism currently has its three basic forms, and they are grouped into the following business groups: (Luković, 2007)

- ports of nautical tourism,
- charter or chartering and
- cruising.

This division of nautical tourism is applied in developed European countries and stems from the basic macro-strategic model of development and natural factors that affect tourism. Our research into the emission markets of nautical tourism in Europe, where nautical tourism is intensively developing, confirms the similarity with our classification of nautical tourism (Ibidem).

Objects of nautical tourism are considered: (Lukić, et al. 2021)

1. Acceptable object of nautical tourism and
2. Sailing facilities of nautical tourism.

The reception facility for nautical tourism is a facility installed on the coast and a void that serves for receiving, tying, guarding, maintaining and equipping vessels used for tourist purposes, as well as providing services to boaters. A boating facility of nautical tourism is a facility with technical characteristics intended for leisure, sports and recreation activities. Nautical tourism reception facilities include: Marinas, harbors and smaller harbors (nautical-tourism center), Pristanište (tourist pier), Moorings (mandračići) and Sidrišta (nautical anchorage) (Ibidem).

Acceptable objects of nautical tourism include marinas, ports and harbors (nautical-tourism center), piers (tourist pier), moorings (mandračići) and anchorages (nautical anchorage). These facilities represent the infrastructure that enables the accommodation and safe stay of vessels and sailors, providing them with the necessary services and benefits. Marinas are specialized dock complexes with all the necessary facilities, while ports and harbors are often central points of nautical activity in certain areas. The piers

are specially adapted for the reception of larger tourist boats, while the moorings enable the temporary anchoring of smaller vessels. Anchorages, on the other hand, represent safe places for anchoring vessels during navigation. All these reception facilities are crucial for providing services and supporting nautical tourism (Pivac et al. 2016).

Total number of nautical catering facilities: 16, of which 118 accommodation units, and a total of 341 individual beds:

(CIS - <https://www.eturista.gov.rs/>)

- 14 hotels (98 accommodation units, a total of 297 individual beds)
- 2 nautical and tourist facilities (20 accommodation units, a total of 44 individual beds)

Nautical catering facilities by municipality: (Ibidem)

- Veliko Gradište:
 - 1 Hotel (6 accommodation units, a total of 18 individual beds)
- Beograd - New Beograd:
 - 5 hotels (44 accommodation units, a total of 136 individual beds),
 - 1 Nautical tourist facility (5 accommodation units, total of 12 individual beds)
- Beograd - Zemun:
 - 3 hotels (22 accommodation units, a total of 83 individual beds),
- Beograd - Čukarica:
 - 3 hotels (9 accommodation units, a total of 10 individual beds),
- Beograd - Surčin:
 - 1 nautical tourist facility (15 accommodation units, a total of 32 individual beds),
- Beograd - Stari Grad:
 - 1 Hotel (6 accommodation units, a total of 18 individual beds),
- Čuprija:
 - 1 hotel (11 accommodation units, a total of 22 individual beds).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of nautical tourism in Serbia indicates the need to improve the nautical tourism product through the implementation of infrastructure projects. Adequate planning and implementation of these projects enable the development of quality infrastructure that will support nautical tourism. It is important to direct efforts towards improving the tourist offer through improving services, promoting attractive destinations and strengthening cooperation between relevant institutions and the private sector. nautical tourism in Serbia represents a significant segment of the tourism industry with great potential for further development. Through systematic planning and implementation of adequate strategies, Serbia can become an increasingly popular nautical destination and achieve sustainable growth in nautical tourism.

Overall, the continuous improvement of the nautical tourism product and strategic planning are key factors for achieving a competitive position on the market. Through the synergy of infrastructure projects, quality services, attractive destinations and sustainable access, Serbia has the potential to become a recognizable and attractive nautical destination, creating new economic opportunities and enriching the country's tourist offer.

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