

## **MARKET DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRS AND DMS PROJECT IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY OF THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES**

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### ***Abstract:***

*The implementation of information technologies, among others, represents a significant determinant in the concept of the development of tourism and the hotel industry. The wishes of tourists are changing, which has encouraged of the Western Balkan countries to create a tourist offer filled with attractive content.*

*Modern trends in the global tourism market are in favor of countries of subregion as a tourist destination. The tourists several short vacations during the year, excursions, return to nature and active vacation, rich cultural heritage, authentic experience and high quality products. The result is a constant increase in the number of arrivals and overnight stays of domestic and foreign tourists, as well as foreign exchange inflows. By dividing the work of the CRS and DMS system of travel agencies, tour operators and airlines, computer solutions for hotel business are also made possible. In addition to hotel companies, solutions for managing the work of tourist destinations were created as a unique extension of marketing strategies and operational business. Thanks to the adopted European development strategies, tourism attracts a large part of financial resources for new investments, training of the workforce and creating a more favorable image of our country in the world.*

**Key words:** *market determinant, tourism, CRS concept, DMS system, economy, hotel industry, Western Balkan*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Given that tourism has become a generator of the economic, social and social development of most countries in the world, including ours, it is necessary to look at its multiplier effects (effects that are reflected by the development of tourism on other economic branches such as: traffic, agriculture, trade, industry, construction, small businesses, etc.), as well as its share in the total GDP, the number of employees in tourism, etc.

The positive effects of the development of tourism are reflected in the development of underdeveloped regions (equalizes regional underdevelopment), the creation of new jobs, which is reflected in the reduction of unemployment and poverty, and the improvement of the living standards of the local population, then in the promotion of investments, development of infrastructure, etc.

Tourism, as a global socio-economic phenomenon, has recorded constant and stable growth in the last six decades. On the other hand, further stable and dynamic growth of international tourism is predicted with the achievement of stable growth of international tourist traffic and income from international tourism. Contemporary trends in the development of international tourism are based on the peculiarities of tourist demand, as well as on the appropriate adjustment of the tourist offer. Bearing that in mind, it can be assessed that tourism is in the process of constant and strong changes. Changes within tourism arise, primarily, from

changing structural elements, that is, the structural transformation of tourism as a whole. The basic changes, which make tourism extremely turbulent, concern the significant action of factors from the environment, connected with an increasingly pronounced awareness of the need to preserve the basis of its development - space, that is, the natural environment.

The aforementioned changes have caused the need for new considerations in relation to the development of tourism, which are based on two basic postulates - the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources, on which the development of tourism is based, and highlighting the problem of the social costs of tourism development. In essence, it is about applying the concept of sustainable development of tourism, that is, about building a sustainable world through tourism.

Global requirements for business improvement, which the computer era has brought into every pore of society, must certainly be met by the tourism industry. In the classic chain, guest-agency-accommodation-entertainment, everyone has their own task and methods for its fulfillment. Within the hotel industry, information technology (IT) has gone the furthest, especially in larger and higher-quality facilities, and enabled the connection of a number of subsystems into a single system, and also a number of hotels into an organized whole. The availability and quality of the human factor are of crucial importance for exploiting the potential that information technology has in the hotel industry. Accordingly, it is of great importance to know how to work on a computer, i.e. information literacy of employees in the hotel industry, without which any information technology potential would be just an expense.

CRS (Computer Reservation System) is a computerized system used to store and manage information, as well as manage travel-related transactions. Although it was created within the airline companies, CRS later expanded to the hotel industry, car rental and other branches of tourism. Companies use this approach to better understand the wants and needs of their customers. Nowadays, tourist organizations develop tourism through destination management information systems (Destination Management System, DMS). The competitiveness of the destination largely depends on the level of development of the DMS system.

To exploit the potential of information technology, the availability of information technology infrastructure and the quality of the human factor are of crucial importance.

## **1. METHODOLOGY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

Determinants of tourism development represent significant elements in the modern concept of economic development of the tourism industry. They represent a framework for formulating responses to new challenges and contradictions on the market in the considered area. It is a fact that the subregion of the Western Balkans has enormous resources in all areas of public life, while innovative trends in the sphere of the market economy contribute to the prosperity of each individual state.

The subject of our research is the analysis of determinants and planning of tourism development with the use of information and communication tools in tourism and the hotel industry. Special emphasis is placed on the implementation of the CRS system and the DMS project in current market circumstances. The aim of the paper is a scientific analysis of the determinants of tourism development in a postmodern environment. In addition, the possibilities of implementing the CRS and DMS concept are analyzed in order to improve the tourist offer and hotel industry in the countries of the Western Balkans. Also, pointing out the importance of innovative trends for achieving stable economic development of countries. The basic hypothesis is: Resources and established determinants of tourism development enable complex opportunities in the tourism and hotel economy. The implementation of information and communication technologies in the considered sphere have an essential importance in the performance of subjects on the

market stage. Auxiliary hypotheses are: 1) The area of the Western Balkans has enormous resources in the field of tourism and improvement of the economic environment; 2) The available information systems, CRS, DMS and others, along with human resources, provide optimal opportunities and perspectives for the development of tourism in individual countries of the subregion.

During the research, known scientific methods and techniques will be implemented. Methods of analysis and synthesis of relevant literature content, descriptive method, comparative, specialization and generalization of selected materials will be used. The scientific justification of the work is reflected in the contribution to the social development of the country from an area that has not been sufficiently researched so far. The social justification of the scientific work means the analysis of the application of innovative postulates for the purpose of improving the tourism industry and the hotel industry for the purpose of economic prosperity, which are of first-class importance for every community, including the countries of the Western Balkans. This is particularly expressed in the current global constellation, burdened with numerous contradictions, which is reflected in all areas of human existence.

## **1. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

### **DETERMINANTS AND PLANNING OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Optimistic assessments of the volume of tourist demand, given, first of all, by the UNWTO, imply their positive influence on the overall relations in the tourist market, considering the dominant position of the demand in relation to the tourist offer. In this context, as the prevailing tendencies on the side of tourist demand, especially in Europe, we can single out:

- refreshment through contrast (tourist trips on the lowland-mountain, city-village, mainland-island, etc.)
- striving for experiences related to cultural-historical heritage and preserved nature, the "green" movement or tourism, which is also called alternative, responsible, "soft", "good" or "new" tourism - refers to tourism in the countryside, in cities, and on the coast. It implies, first of all, clean water, a clean and safe sea, healthy food and unpolluted air, i.e. tourism that is not mass but "friendly" directed towards the natural environment,
- "blue" or nautical movement, i.e. demand (sea cruise using the system of marinas, ports and anchorages),
- the search for places, events and experiences that have a pronounced identity, integrity and diversity,
- the demand for village (rural) and agrotourism - implies staying in different types of accommodation (not exclusively in rural households) and engaging in activities (sports, adventure, challenges, art, handicrafts, etc.),
- demand for health, spiritual, mental renewal and renewal of identity - refers to new forms of health or spa tourism: striving for better condition (recreational activities, sports and exercises, diet, fitness) and the desire for better health through the fight against stress. (Bogetić, Lekić, Antić, 3, 2017)

"Green" tourism, health tourism and tourism related to the natural and cultural environment can be considered, in synchronized action, the backbone of an increasingly significant form of tourism, which is called eco tourism, alternative tourism or responsible tourism. Rural tourism is an important part of this increasingly important form of tourism.

One of the sectors that will be significantly affected by the outbreak of the corona virus is certainly tourism. This refers not only to the reduction of international travel, but also of domestic travel, as well as the accompanying catering activities: restaurants, clubs and cafes. The tourism sector, together with the accompanying activities, is one of the most important sectors in the whole of Europe - at the EU level, it participates in the generation of as much as 10% of GDP. Of course, the participation of tourism is higher in Mediterranean countries due to sea tourism, but winter tourism (mountains and ski resorts) and visits to larger cities are also important. Italy is currently the most affected due to measures that have put the entire country into a kind of supervised quarantine, which can have significant knock-on effects.

A potential positive about this is that there are some indications that the virus can be affected by the sun (so not heat, but UV radiation), and that this will lead to a stabilization of the condition and the withdrawal of the virus as the weather improves, which could ease the situation until the beginning of the peak tourist season in countries that tie tourism to the period when it is possible to swim in the sea (May - October). Whether it will actually come to that is, for now, just speculation.

The complexity of tourism as an economic and social activity requires that the planning and management of tourism development be specific and require special organization at all levels. Tourism development planning is, in essence, a research-based process aimed at optimizing the potential contribution of tourism to human well-being and the quality of the natural/environmental environment. It is carried out on several levels, in accordance with the nature of tourism, where the issue of finding a balance between individual levels of organization is particularly important, especially within tourist destinations (the relationship between state and parastatal bodies at all levels, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the tourism industry).

The concept of sustainable development of tourism can become the basis of purposeful development of tourism in tourist destinations at all levels if its principles are included in the planning process of tourism development, especially strategic, and if they are expressed in strategic development goals. (Gajić, 7, 2024) The basic or priority goals of tourism development, within the planning process, can be very numerous, diverse and conflicting. They can be expressed in economic, social and environmental terms. Accepting the awareness of the need to determine the strategic goals of tourism development, which are broader than the economic ones, implies a greater influence of the public sector, that is, state and parastatal bodies.

## **ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF THE TOURIST ECONOMY**

The direct impacts of tourism on the economy are multiple and we can single out the following: impact on social gross product, impact on the level of development of those economic activities that participate in the formation of the tourism economy, impact on the country's balance of payments with foreign countries, impact on the level of employment of the population and the appropriate level of its standard of living, impact on the socio-economic development of underdeveloped regions, impact on the protection of natural capacities and impact on the rehabilitation of damage caused by inadequate management of natural resources. (Mastilo, 8, 2005)

Tourism is also called the "invisible branch of export" because it provides income to the state and the economy, without anything being directly produced and exported. The consumption of domestic and foreign tourists affects the social product and national income, i.e. gross social product because it stimulates material production, intended for the various needs of tourists. By overflowing part of personal

consumption funds from foreign countries, tourism most directly affects the growth of the already mentioned gross social product.

If we look at some branches of tourism such as coastal, mountain, spa, rural, hunting, congress and try to determine their specificities and their impact on the development of a certain area, we will come to the conclusion that there are many more of their common needs that engage a large number of economic entities. Enhancing, promoting and including an area in the tourist flow drives the economy in order to ensure fast and quality access to that place, accommodation of people, supply of energy and goods to the place, facilities for quality use of tourists' time, maintenance and protection. Last, but not least, is the education (and upbringing) of people who will work in tourist capacities.

In order to realize the tourist offer, the economy can engage in the following projects:

- Construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure: roads for air, water, land automobile and railway traffic,
- Maintenance and construction of energy infrastructure (power plants, transmission lines, substations, energy supply),
- Maintenance and construction of communal infrastructure,
- Construction of accommodation capacities: hotels, private accommodation, camps, ethnic villages,
- Equipping accommodation facilities,
- Providing quality food products,
- Engagement of local agricultural capacities to ensure quality products of the local environment,
- Construction and maintenance of a specific tourist offer: beaches, ski slopes, cable cars, hiking trails and mountaineering routes, local trails and roads...
- Education and training of employees,
- Production of propaganda material and souvenirs,
- Promotion – advertisement of tourist offer,
- Education and organization of services for control and protection. (Bethapudi, 2, 2013)

From this review, it is obvious that there is a small number of economic activities that do not find their interest in the development of tourism. The percentage share of tourism in the gross national income is relatively small (USA - 0.65%, Spain - 4.15%, France - 1.91%, Italy - 2.06%, China - 1.23%), but its influence on the engagement of the economy is significant.

An important segment is also the influence of tourism on the engagement of local workforce in capacities for the reception of tourists and in maintenance and control of changes in the natural environment. Nature protection activities cannot be called the most important because all the previously mentioned activities are important for the development of tourism, but maintaining the attractiveness of natural and social objects and processes is crucial for the survival of tourism in a specific area. Tourism is an economic branch that can significantly affect the degradation of an area, because it is mostly related to areas that have been changed to a lesser extent or not at all. Thus, tourism can appear as a factor of negative environmental change - degradation, but also as a source of funds for its development and protection.

Tourist movements are nothing new for human civilization. The novelty is their massiveness, relatively easy accessibility of any place on Earth and, therefore, a negative impact on space that knows no borders. The number of tourists increases with the increase in standards, but also the important reason for the tourist movement is changes and changing living conditions in the place of residence. Today, tourism

is far from the concept of luxury that a small group of wealthy people can afford, and it is a necessity that is unaffordable for all residents of today's cities. Intensive urbanization leads to many unresolved problems in cities, starting from the lack of housing, employment, health care, traffic jams, noise and increasing air and water pollution. It is clear that a person living in such an environment cries out for peace, greenery and healthy food. And so we come to the problem that is reflected in the short-term stay of a large number of people on a relatively small island, an area of protected nature. (Chan, Wu, Vipulakom, 4, 2020)

Tourism is the most prevalent activity and human activity in the area of protected natural landscapes. Since it is about the mass presence of space users, tourism is a mass phenomenon, which brings with it the anthropoppression of space. The large presence of people threatens the survival of other forms of life, especially in cases where the level of environmental education and education of visitors is low. On the other hand, tourists simply scatter over the entire territory of the protected property, leaving behind a large amount of waste that is very difficult to collect. Furthermore, tourism implies the prior construction of facilities for use by tourists, which certainly disrupts not only the environment of the natural good, but also the functioning of the ecosystem. To activate tourist capacities, access traffic facilities and facilities for communication, electricity and water supply are necessary, all of which disrupt the natural ecosystems of the protected area. In particular, the problem of channeling and drainage of waste water, collection and disposal of municipal waste is raised. (Lješević, 9, 1998) Due to the carelessness of tourists, fires and illegal dumping are not uncommon. The very exploitation of the area (ski tracks, walking tracks, work of leveling machines, etc.) causes the emergence of the grass cover, accelerates erosive processes and changes ecosystems as a whole. Hotel operation, heating, burning and decomposition of waste cause air pollution.

When the tourist offer of an area is realized, it is very important to engage the appropriate local and state authorities to control pollution, protect and remediate possible damage in the environment, because if an area that was attractive in the tourist offer for a period is not protected, it will lose its attractiveness in a very short period of time and not only will lose its tourist importance, but it can be so changed that it loses its economic importance and remains a burden on future generations. This need not only for strict protection but also for the economic use of protected areas as the most attractive for tourism was defined in the 90s of the last century through an approach defined as "sustainable development" or "sustainable tourism". One satisfactory definition of sustainable development is that it is development that meets the needs of the present without putting at risk the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is no doubt that tourism has a great influence on the overall economy of a country, but it is also clear that we should leave the current tourist values as an inheritance to future generations in a better or at least unchanged state. (Đaković, Njeguš, Milović, 5, 2016)

In order to respect the principles and achieve the goals of sustainable tourism development, it is necessary to accept responsibility and develop awareness of the need to change the behavior of all participants in the tourist traffic, which would lead in the direction of harmonizing tourism development and environmental preservation. It is a long-term process aimed at changes in the relationships that are established between social, economic and natural systems and processes.

Therefore, the sustainable development of tourism does not negate the development of tourism, but on the contrary, it is a process that allows development to be achieved without degrading or exhausting those resources on which it is based. This way can be achieved either by managing resources in such a way that they can self-renew to the extent that they are used, or by greater representation and use of resources with a short regeneration period. With such an approach, resources can serve future generations to the same extent as current generations.



## CRS AND DMS IN TOURISM

A Computer Reservation System (CRS) is a computerized system used to store and collect information and manage travel-related transactions. It originally originated within airlines (in the 1960s, American Airlines introduced SABER CRS) and later spread to travel agencies as sales channels.

In the mid-80s, CRS developed into a comprehensive global distribution system (Global Distribution System - GDS) that offers a wide range of tourist products and services and provides mechanisms for communication between airlines and travel agencies. The development of CRS in GDS integrates tourism services, uses CRS infrastructure and provides added value services. (Gajić, 6, 2024)

CRS Modules are reservations, customer database with all data, group reservations, corporate event reservations, price and inventory control, administration, report, GDS interface, PMS interface. Information that CRS contains: room types, price lists, room inventory (types, charts, etc.), client addresses, product descriptions, images, and other information, reservation information, Geocode information, IATA cities and locations.

GDS systems are enabled in the world e-tourism market today and each hotel facility is able to use only one GDS through providers that can be e-tourism agencies or e-tour operators. We pointed out that GDS works on the principle of generating data from the web (internet), and it does this through communication with all sites that have the possibility of booking hotel accommodation capacities. GDS offers information and reservations on all tourist products such as accommodation, car rental, air traffic schedule, etc.

Four leading GDSs: Amadeus, SABER, Worldspan and Galileo. There are also several smaller or regional GDSs such as SITA Sahara, Infiniti (Japan), Axess (Japan), Tapas (Korea), Fantasia (South Pacific), Abacus (Asia/Pacific), etc., which serve the interests of specific regions or countries.

The main goal of the GDS system is to incorporate the business of airlines, travel agencies and tour operators with hotel and other accommodation facilities in order to ensure a cycle of mutual business. "Destination Management Systems are systems that consolidate and distribute a comprehensive range of tourism products through a large number of channels and platforms, mainly for a specific region and support the activities of the DMS organization for that region. DMS systems try to bring consumers closer to the market of the region as a single unit, by providing timely information about that destination, timely reservations, DMS system tools and paying special attention to supporting small and medium-sized suppliers in tourism." (Frew, Horan, 10, 2007)

Destination tourism organizations use - the Internet to provide information for all stakeholders, support clients in the procurement of tourism products, enable electronic commerce (eCommerce), inform and coordinate crisis situations (e.g. avalanche in Austria, earthquake in Turkey, etc.) Extranet, to coordinate with all partners, deliver documents and other resources, develop and improve partnership. Intranet, to coordinate tourism activities, improve internal administration, carry out strategic planning and management, facilitate marketing activities.

DMS provide new tools for marketing and promotion of destinations. It is a set of interactively accessible digitized information about destinations. DMS usually includes information about attractions and facilities as well as the possibility of booking.

In addition to enabling the search and selection of individual tourism products, DMS can support travelers in creating their personalized destination. They can plan their trips, develop individual packages online or buy commercial packages from tour operators (eCommerce).

A DMS is usually managed by a Destination Management Organization (DMO), which can be either public or private organizations or a combination of both. A DMS typically includes a database of products and customers and mechanisms to connect them. Good examples from practice are Tiscover from Austria, Gulliver from Ireland, WorldNet, Integra, Infocentre and others.

Tourism Destination Management Systems (TDMS) is a network of tourist information. TDMS has three key objectives, which are to facilitate the search for information and decision-making on which destination to go, to improve the development of the tourism industry and access to the global market, and to improve the government's marketing and promotion of the region.

DMS enables information search by category, geography and keywords, then, client itinerary planning, reservations, client database management system, customer relationship management functions, market research and analysis, image libraries and press materials, publishing through electronic and traditional channels, event planning and management, marketing optimization, data entry and management, financial management, management information systems and performance evaluation, economic analysis, access to external sources such as weather, transportation schedules and travel planning, theaters, ticket reservations, etc.

6A framework for the analysis of tourist destinations includes:

- Attractions – cultural monuments, museums, sea, sand and sun, festivals, concerts, conferences, religious ceremonies, sports events...
- Accessibility – transportation system (planes, ships, buses, car/boat/bicycle rental)
- Amenities (atmosphere, attractiveness) – catering, accommodation, clubs, theaters, restaurants, sports facilities, car rental, shopping...
- Available packages - ready-made tourist packages offered by tour operators, travel agencies, DICIRMS...
- Activities - all activities at the destination that the client will do during the visit (photographing, tennis tournaments, diving, hiking, professional training...
- Ancillary services – maps, email, weather forecast, international news, banks, post offices, hospitals, etc. (Ali, Woody, 1, 2018)

The advanced DMS is called DICRMS (Destination Integrated Computerized Information Reservation Management Systems) which digitizes the entire tourism industry and integrates all aspects of the value chain. It provides an info-structure for communications and business processes between all stakeholders in the value chain. The DICRMS should enable online bookings and purchases and operate in a global network (WAN) and be accessible both via the Internet and via mobile devices.

The development stages of TDMS solutions for one destination could be divided into three steps: (Chan, Wu, Vipulakom, 4, 2020)

Phase I: Reservation of services and accommodation

Currently, many travel agents manually search for specific information. In the first phase, a database should be created that will contain multimedia information about all tourist attractions and services. This information system will enable:



- Searching and obtaining information and thereby enable more efficient management of requests for specific information.

- Agents will be able to automatically search for information on a specific area of interest (eg, accommodation, food, restaurants, events, sports facilities, etc.) and have up-to-date information on prices, availability, amenities, schedules, etc.

The completion of this phase would be the linking of the Computerized Reservation Systems (CRS) to this information system. When TDMS becomes operational, a call center should be activated that will handle incoming requests and make reservations through TDMS.

#### Phase II: Reservation Expansion

The TDMS system will be expanded to include the possibility of booking other attractions, events, restaurants, tours, etc.

#### Phase III: Interactive multimedia services

Phase III of TDMS development is a longer-term vision of the system. Reservation and tourist information will be expanded to include voice, video and audio, graphics, etc., and would be distributed through voice mail, smart phones, and other Internet services.

This network of tourist information should allow a potential traveler to search and virtually visit cities, hotels, view tours, browse shops, etc. and finally book all the elements of your trip from home.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the crucial changes in tourism, which occurred due to the current global economic crisis, in recent years almost a third of tourist activities take place outside of the classically understood trips due to annual vacations. Attractive ways of traveling, special tourist products and modern destinations are the new facts of the world tourism industry. The subregion of the Western Balkans can be competitive in the global tourism game if it professionally improves its attractions by following the rules and keys to the success of the modernization of tourist products and their presentation on the global market. The countries of the Western Balkans today have only comparative advantages in tourism because they have a diversified structure of attractions, because they are close to traditional and new tourist markets, because of their long history and general recognition, preserved natural resources and relatively good communication. The process of transformation of comparative into competitive advantages in the tourism of the countries of the Western Balkans is part of the overall reform process, as well as the political determination of tourism as an important generator of national well-being. Today, especially for the countries of the Western Balkans, an important priority is investment in tourist infrastructure, that is, the construction of a modern tourist system as one of the biggest investments in times of economic crisis.

Information technologies and tourism are two key catalysts that enable dynamic, innovative and educational communities and organizations to communicate and interact with the outside world. Tourism is expanding very quickly and will become one of the most dominant economies today, and as a result, better quality and more efficient access to information and services is required. On the other hand, IT offers new tools and mechanisms for information management.

The market maturation of tourist destinations takes place in an increasingly complex and competitive environment. For this reason, destinations, both those in the development phase and those that today want to reach, regain or maintain an advantage over the competition, must be provided with a whole range of instruments and functional methods for assessing the real situation and creating future scenarios.

One of the key instruments will be information technology, with a special emphasis on tourist destination management systems. In the hotel industry, an appropriate information system is necessary in order to successfully implement its operations and achieve success in the market. The advantages of the information system in the hotel company are that it provides more information per unit of time and thus increases the productivity of the respective functions in the company.

Hotel companies, tourist destinations and travel agencies have joined forces to provide functional information flows with the unique goal of enabling consumer satisfaction through CRM - Customer Relationship Management. DMS systems have two primary functions: (1) provide users with comprehensive and accurate multimedia information that is accessible at any time and from any place and (2) enable the reservation of accommodation and other tourism products or services.

In today's modern world, consumers are provided with information technology a simple, fast and efficient way of obtaining information about all elements related to vacation, business travel or any other type of information related to tourist activities.

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