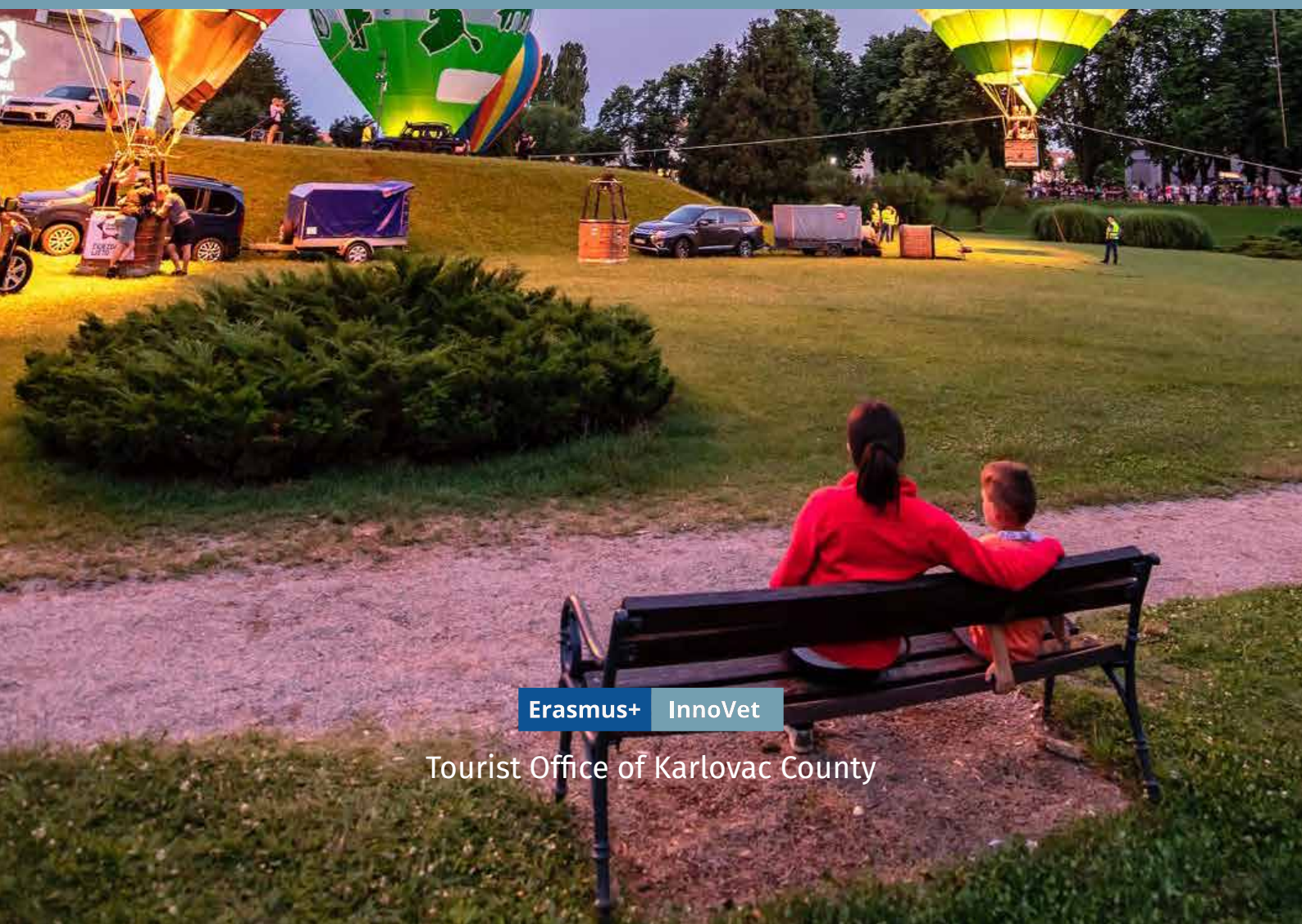


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Edited by Željko Trezner

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products:

manual for the application of digital technologies and
citizen science in evaluating tourist attractions



Erasmus+ InnoVet

Tourist Office of Karlovac County



Ericsson Nikola Tesla



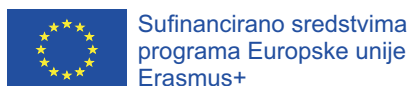
GOSTUR



Edited by Željko Trezner

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products:

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Tourist Office of Karlovac County
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About the project

There is no doubt that strong structural changes have impacted contemporary tourism. The question that arises is how to make tourism more sustainable and resilient. That is why the focus of the InnoVET Tourism project is on the digital and green transition as tools for the transformation of contemporary tourism. During the project, possibilities for using information technologies and citizen science in vocational tourism education have been explored. The project put special emphasis on practical solutions and challenges that stakeholders in education and tourism business cannot manage on their own.

The project is innovative in the paradigm shift where vocational education is not just following the world of work, but acts within a new relationship as a full partner in defining new trends and needs. During the project innovative digital tools and methodology (InnoVET) have been developed, to apply quadruple helix and citizen science in mapping tourist attractions and monitoring the environment. InnoVET solutions have been tested and implemented through several perspectives. Focus groups included tourism vocational schools, tourism colleges, tourist boards, tourism and IT companies, associations and various interest groups, as well as the local community.

The impact of the application of digital and green concept on innovations in vocational education and training was determined by following results during the project. This primarily refers to the development of IT tools and methodology for including vocational students into sustainable tourism development. Also, the applied digital solutions, which are simple to use in vocational education and training, have a clear purpose in the educational process and match well with the need for digital and green skills. Finally, the application of the quadruple helix approach in the project made vocational students and teachers equal partners with the stakeholders from the public and private sector and local community in the innovation process.

Tested and finished InnoVET solution includes a digital tool for mapping tourist attractions and three complementary manuals. The complete solution enables educational institutions, tourist boards, tourist companies, associations or local self-governing authorities an easy initiation of their own project with negligible expenses. The use of crowdsourcing concept and InnoVET solutions enables the creation of a tourist attractions database, developing innovative tourist products, monitoring the state of tourist attractions and reporting damage or pollution done to them. For the purpose of additional information on using InnoVET solutions, disseminating activity results after the end of the project, and promoting InnoVET on a national and EU level as an example of good practice all partners are available.



1. Developing sustainable tourist products

Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Introduction

It seems that collaborative approach to tourism development is the best way to engage a greater number of different stakeholder groups in a tourism destination. The same applies to creating high added value to a tourist product. For this reason, the first part of this chapter describes the most important stakeholder groups and the need for collaborative tourism development. This applies particularly to the strategic planning process, branding, creating a tourism value chain and including stakeholders that possess the various competences needed.

Natural and social attractions are the basis of tourist resources and the main components of every tourist product. That is why the second part of this chapter describes the specific groups, character and relationships between different tourist resources. Special attention is given to the way different resources are used and the impacts of mass and special interest tourism. Finally, the opportunities for special interest tourism development due to diverse tourist offer are presented.

Natural and cultural heritage are important components of a tourist product. That is why the third part of this chapter presents the concept, elements, characteristics, perspectives and levels of a tourist product. Special attention is given to the possibility of a tourist product being a creative product, and the opportunities for co-creation. Also, the importance of developing complex tourist products that create a reason for visiting a tourism destination is presented.

Tourist products in special interest tourism include activities that are connected to personal affinities, hobbies or specific professions, and the motivation process is somewhat different than in mass tourism. That is why the final part of this chapter presents the challenges of developing tourist products for special interest tourism. Special attention is given to the reasons for traveling, the perception of travel benefits, differences in behavior, needs and motivation process of special interest tourists. Finally, additional attention is given to the role of the stakeholders with special competences in this type of tourism.

1.1. Collaborative (participatory) approach to sustainable tourism development

The aim of this chapter is to inform readers about the most important stakeholders and the need for collaborative tourism development through the process of strategic planning, branding and the creation of tourism value chain.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- present the most important stakeholder groups in sustainable tourism development
- explain the idea of co-creation as a form of creating tourism values
- point out the importance of strategic planning and branding in tourism development
- explain the role of value chain in tourism
- illustrate the benefits of collaborative tourism development
- interpret the challenges of including stakeholders with various necessary competences

It is known that **sustainable tourism is not possible without active inclusion of different interest groups and institutions** that are present in an area. One must also differentiate between sustainable tourism as a condition and sustainable tourism development as a process. Sustainable tourism development means that **common involvement is connected with long-term development activities**. They are based on balancing various, and often contrasting, goals and interests. It is therefore not possible to develop sustainable tourism without understanding, collaboration and mutual trust between groups and institutions involved.

Sustainable tourism development must include as wide a range of different stakeholders as possible. These include tourism companies, various administrative bodies, from local to regional and governmental, as well as international organizations and parastatal bodies. Important stakeholders include educational and scientific institutions, as well as the media. **Vitally important are local residents and all their forms of association:** vocational organizations, trade unions, citizen associations,

Sustainable tourism

Stakeholders

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

temporary pressure groups, and even religious communities. Finally, tourists must also be accounted as stakeholders in sustainable tourism development.

It seems that avoiding the use of quintuple helix model (companies - educational and research institutions - government - citizens - environment) is inevitable in sustainable development and interaction with tourists. That is why the term co-creation appears as a special type of value creation in the open innovation or open tourism paradigm. The basic **idea behind co-creation is developing added value through an intense process of collaboration with various stakeholders in the environment, including buyers and users.** That is why a collaborative approach is recommended as a model in managing tourism destinations, with destination management organizations taking on strategic tasks.

The particularity of destination management is in the fact that **management organizations cannot control the development of tourism in a tourism destination as they would a development of a company** since they lack direct supervision over key production factors. That leaves very few effective tools for efficient tourism destination management. Among them are strategic planning, branding, and the development of a destination value chain. Interestingly, all three rely heavily on **the principle of the high participation level of a wide spectrum of stakeholders in a tourism destination**, including service users, in this case, tourists. The idea of a collaborative approach is based on the necessity to satisfy the interests and needs of all stakeholders involved.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Open tourism

Tourism destination management

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

The principles of collaborative approach must be taken into consideration in both the process and the result of strategic planning. Strategic plans that result from a planning process not including a high level of participation of many stakeholders usually end forgotten. That is why the initial step in **the need for collaborative approach is defining the vision and mission of tourism development**. In other words, the vision should define a clear end goal towards which tourism development is heading. An end goal which is not ambitious enough, just like an overly ambitious goal, will equally demotivate participants on a development path.

It is important to **define the mission** following collaborative principles **as an answer to the question of why tourism needs to be developed at all**. The answer to the issue of the purpose of tourism development must include the interests of different stakeholders. If every participant group included in the development process cannot identify with the purpose of tourism development, they will not contribute to it. Possibly, they will act contrary to it. The same applies to defining main goals and ways to achieve them, and other elements of a strategic plan. Since strategic planning of tourism development is a necessary integral planning, the interests of participants must include a wide range of questions. **An integral approach is based on dimensioning the development within limits of available natural resources, and must unite economic, social, spatial and infrastructural aspects of development**. That is impossible to achieve without a high level of participation from many stakeholders.

A tourism destination branding is a process with a goal of developing and presenting a unique identity that will distinguish a tourism destination from its competition. Apart from **the brand being a starting point for all communication activities, it is at the same time a medium through which a strong emotional bond is created between tourists and a tourism destination**. It must be remembered that the strength of a brand lies in a set of positive emotional reactions of all participants within a tourism destination. A good brand articulates the ambitions of a tourism destination and defines quality standards which local stakeholders must follow. Finally, it affects **the creation of a sense of importance in local residents**. That is why a high level of participant inclusion and the application of collaborative tourism management principles in the branding process is a necessity.

The same applies to the creation of a tourism value chain as a complex network of goods, services and experiences providers in order to create added value. **Tourism value chain should support a high level of value perception when traveling to a destination**. Only destinations capable of creating a high value perception in tourists will achieve profit that significantly surpasses all the expenses generated by tourist arrivals. A high number of stakeholders from both public and private sectors are

Collaborative approach

Tourism development

Tourism destination branding

Tourism value chain

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

involved in creating that perception. Without including and applying collaborative tourism development principles, that is very difficult to achieve on a satisfactory level. That is even truer in the development of a tourism destination product portfolio: **tourist products which create a stronger value perception in tourists can create bigger mark-ups** (added product value).

Collaborative (participatory) concept of tourism development creates many benefits. First, it creates a more just distribution of power among stakeholders. It then **leads to a more just division of benefits and expenses and truly supports sustainable development**. Such a relationship encourages stakeholders to participate, support, and include innovative and creative solutions, as well as to engage a wide range of competences from the local community. Unfortunately, when creating a collaborative environment for developing tourist products, this last fact is often forgotten. That is why local people of various professions that seemingly have no connection with tourism are often excluded from the process. The same applies to people with various hobbies, activities and interests, which are in fact the basis for developing special interest tourism. Namely, **there is practically no profession, hobby or human activity which cannot be used as the basis for developing a special interest tourism product**.



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Collaborative tourism development

This is why collaborative principles of tourism development should be based on a wide scale of inclusion of the stakeholders who are not counted on when developing traditional tourist products. Namely, geo-tourism cannot be developed without geologists, ornithological tourism without biologists, or creative art tourism without art educators. It is logical that mountaineering tourism cannot be developed without the members of a mountaineering association, and the same applies to hunting or fishing tourism. This is the reason why **a major step in establishing a collaborative network for sustainable development of special interest tourism is the identification of members with various competences needed** for designing, developing and implementing particular tourist products.

The process of identifying and including stakeholders with various competences creates many challenges. The first one is **the acceptance of the fact that someone's specific competence can be a basis for developing a tourist product**. Sometimes, when this understanding does exist, there are stakeholders who are not comfortable with participation in activities involving tourists. These are often time-consuming activities in which stakeholders cannot get involved due to regular work, family or social schedules. One must **not ignore the possibility of conflict among stakeholders from the same profession or activity**. It can occur because of one's prestige or a lack of competence. Another challenge is a potential conflict between formally educated stakeholders (e.g. biology teachers) and amateurs (birdwatchers). Some stakeholders find no motivation to participate in tourist activities, while others have negative past experiences, while some reject collaboration because they have been ignored or excluded from the decision-making process about tourism development for a long time.

All these reasons clearly point out that the creation of a wide collaborative platform for tourism development is not a simple task. However, for developing special interest tourism products based on a neglected attraction base, it is a necessity. Although many tourism destinations are slowly developing tools and models to recognize and evaluate, as well as sustainably use and protect natural and cultural heritage, their **appropriate inclusion in tourism value chain ultimately depends on the existence of specific competence holders who are ready to participate in developing and implementing tourist products**. In other words, without a simultaneous application of collaborative tourism development concept and crowdsourcing, visible effects will be difficult to achieve.

Collaborative principles

Stakeholders with various competences

Collaborative platform for tourism development

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1.2. Nature and society as the basis for sustainable tourism development

The aim of this chapter is to inform readers about nature and society as the main components of tourist products, especially in terms of specific groups, character, interrelations and the use of various resources in tourism.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe nature and society as the main components of tourist products
- explain the character of most natural and social resources in tourism
- illustrate the relationships between tourist attraction base and tourist activities
- point out the most important groups of natural and social tourism resources
- present the impacts of mass and special interest tourism
- interpret the opportunities for tourism development due to heterogeneous tourism demand

Sustainable tourism development should be based on the principles of ecological, socio-cultural and economic sustainability. Still, **the widest framework for sustainable tourism development is the natural environment**. This environment is most commonly defined within the framework of a human community's development and its socio-cultural characteristics. That includes economic relationships within the community and the relationships with other communities. The natural environment used to have a strong impact on technologies that the community uses to produce the goods needed. It is no longer the case since **technological advancement enables the development of economic and social relationships that are not as conditioned by the natural environment** as before.

Still, the fact that **tourists travel because of the environment and strongly affect changes in it** cannot be ignored. That is why the impact of tourism on a tourism destination is significant. This is where all the natural

Sustainable tourism
development

Natural
environment

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

and social attractions that interest tourists are located, and this is the environment that tourism has a profound impact on. On the one hand, tourism seeks and uses untouched and authentic natural and social attractions, and, on the other, it changes them. This is why **nature and society are the basic components of every sustainable tourist product, and ecological and social sustainability are the pillars of sustainable tourism development.**

There is no doubt that natural and social attractions make up the most important part of tourism resource base. Therefore, main assets which will get its economic value from tourism need to be identified in nature and community of a tourism destination. Within the framework of tourism as an occurrence this happens in a particular way. Namely, **most natural and social resources are public or non-economic assets**, and their use is either unlimited or cannot be limited in any way. Pleasant climate and clean air, a nice view or an attractive public area are examples of such resources. That is why their economic value can be determined only indirectly and most commonly through the price of hospitality services. Within accommodation price, sea view or an important historical locality is added value, as is an attractive location in the main city square in the catering service price.



Photo: Jošt Gantar, Slovenska turistična organizacija

That is why tourist activities are strongly focused in the areas where the most valuable natural and social attractions of a tourism destination are located. On the one hand, this creates **excellent opportunities for sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage, while, on the other, causes risks of damage, due to overwhelming pressure on the heritage** that tourists create. Not using or neglecting to use an opportunity to

Impact of tourism

Natural and social attractions

Tourist activities

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

create tourism value in heritage is as damaging as its overuse. That is why developing tourism and tourist products that achieve this delicate balance is so difficult.

In any case, a tourism destination that offers richer and more diversified natural and social resources will have greater opportunities for tourism development. However, it seems that all natural and social resources need not be a part of tourist resource base. Traditionally, it is considered that only resources with a high degree of attractiveness can draw tourists. This applies particularly to mass tourism. However, **in special interest tourism it is not the level of appeal to a wide group of tourists that matters, but rather a specific value for a narrow market niche**. Some natural and social values may be totally irrelevant for the mass market, but can be of immense value for a targeted group. This basically means that **every segment of natural or cultural heritage has the potential to become a tourist attraction**. Also, it is common to build attractions for tourists (amusement parks, casinos, etc.) as well as to have attractive offer which has nothing to do with tourism (shopping, health, administrative, educational, and similar facilities).

Due to traditional approach to ecological and social sustainability, it is useful to differentiate between elements that make up natural and social tourist resources. In reality, the level of attractiveness of a tourism destination is determined by tourists, who combine different complementary resources based on their value to them personally. Also, **a decision to visit a tourism destination is a consequence of motivation to fulfill various biological and social needs**. That is why it is impossible to see a resource base of a tourism destination exclusively from the point of view of natural or social resources.

Traditionally, natural tourist resources are divided into several important sub-groups. The first includes climate resources, such as various types of climate, especially in terms of the range of insolation, humidity, air temperature, wind intensity and direction, and the type and quantity of precipitation. That is why **climate change can have a great impact on the changing value of such resources**. Especially important natural resources belong to hydrographic group, since most tourist movements are connected to the coasts of oceans, seas, lakes, rivers or thermal springs. Therefore, **any pollution of hydrographic resources or their drainage due to climate change or other human activities means the disappearance of an important tourism asset**.

Tourists are also attracted to various geomorphological resources, such as mountains, volcanoes, gorges, canyons and caves. They are mostly attractive due to their authentic value or appearance, and **their value as a resource diminishes due to invasive human interventions: building**

Specific value for a narrow market niche

Natural resources

Social resources

Climate resources

Hydrographic resources

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

settlements, traffic infrastructure and industrial facilities, or large-scale raw material extraction. Flora and fauna as a tourist attraction is usually directly related to climate, hydrographic and geomorphological resources, and **especially sensitive to all the changes in the environment**. Finally, the combination of geomorphological and hydrographic resources and vegetation which depends on climate as well as human and animal activities, represents a landscape tourist resource. It is extremely valuable as well as sensitive to all the actions mentioned, so extra attention should be given to it.

Social tourist resources are also divided into sub-groups. Tourists are mostly attracted to cultural-historical resources. These are the preserved remnants of past civilizations, such as various buildings and monuments, as well as technological and artistic achievements. A great **challenge in giving tourism value to such resources lies in their capacity to receive many tourists and/or activities used by tourists, which can damage them**. There are challenges related to artistic tourist resources, such as fine art, music or theatre, and collections in museums, galleries, archives and libraries. Still, the non-material and movable material heritage is usually under the care of heritage institutions, so the challenges are different. They are not so much related to viability, as to **the question of appropriate heritage interpretation**.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Geomorphological resources

Flora and fauna

Landscape resources

Cultural-historical resources

Artistic resources

The question of interpretation is especially relevant for ethno-social resources which consist of various material and spiritual values of a nation and/or minorities living in an area. They include folk games, songs, dances, beliefs and customs, together with material results of these customs, in the form of national costumes, handicrafts and cuisine. **The simplest forms of mass presentation of such heritage to tourists lead to its distortion or partial loss of authenticity.** That is why their tourism evaluation needs to be done with special care. Similar challenges exist with manifestation tourist resources. It is sometimes necessary to preserve some manifestations of great value for the local people from tourist participation. Similarly, **the consequences of organizing manifestations for only a particular tourist group must be considered, since this can negatively affect the lives of local people.**

Finally, as a unique set of all social resources in an area, one must consider ambient tourist resources: settlements, urban complexes and areas such as streets and squares, parks and even cemeteries, which are particularly sensitive to inappropriate spatial interventions. For the appropriateness of such interventions, esthetic criteria need to be employed, which is a separate challenge. We can conclude that **the answer to the question of tourism development will be searched for in a very narrow and grey area between inappropriate use and overprotection of natural and social resources.**

How can natural and cultural heritage be appropriately protected, while avoiding inappropriate use of that same heritage as a tourist resource? That is the question which does not get an easy, and definitely not an unambiguous answer. However, **there are methods, principles, practices and models which help to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate solutions.** Among them is a collaborative inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders, the application of highly ethical principles and socially responsible business practices in tourism, as well as the use of tourism development models which are based on the sustainable development goals. That is why **continuous development of competences among all tourism stakeholders is necessary, in order for them to successfully deal with the challenges created by the use of heritage in tourist products.**

Although the development of tourism can be especially invasive and destructive towards heritage, it can be equally saving. There are, in fact, **examples of irreversible damage that the use of heritage in tourism created, as well as examples of tourism generating profits and saving valuable heritage from ruin.** Furthermore, there are examples where such profits saved local communities from emigration and abandoning a traditional way of life. It seems that tourism driven by mass demand (mass tourism) creates more negative impacts and is more difficult to

Ethno-social resources

Manifestation resources

Ambient resources

Natural and cultural heritage protection

Mass tourism

manage. That does not necessarily mean that every special interest tourism niche has only positive impacts. However, **it is logical to assume that in small-scale tourism damages will be smaller too.**

It is often pointed out that so-called alternative tourism (as opposed to mass tourism) presents a better solution when using cultural and natural heritage in tourist products. It is actually a matter of numerous **alternative, specific or special types of tourism as an answer to mass, summer and coastal tourist movements in seaside tourism as the dominant type of tourism.** The concept of selective tourism is often used in connection with specific types of tourism, as opposed to unselective use of main tourist resources in mass tourism. That is why **the matter of using heritage in tourist products is a matter of strategic choice.**

Do tourism destinations even have a choice in collision with contemporary tourism demand? At first glance, it seems they do not. **Contemporary tourism demand is mass, price-elastic, very seasonal and spatially concentrated.** It leans by its nature towards the concept of economies of scale. Most demand is realized in nearby tourism destinations. However, one must not forget that **tourism demand leans towards heterogeneity,** even though one would not think so based on the characteristics mentioned. Namely, **every tourist wants something different and special.** The only problem is that all tourists cannot afford it, or it does not seem rational in tourism connected with vacation and relaxation, which is offered by many tourism destinations.

Obviously, to encourage heterogeneous demand, the satisfaction of specific needs will be targeted, not just vacation and relaxation. **These specific demands are related to particular activities which often enable dispersion of tourist activities into wider area, to more attractions and over a longer period of time, outside the usual summer season.** This creates less pressure on the destination and tourist resources, thus helping in the protection of heritage used in tourist products, which are based more on specific added value of a tourist asset for a narrower target group than on a lower price of service for a large number of tourists.

That is why specific types of tourism with activities related to natural resources is described in traditional reference books as health, sports, nautical, rural, hunting, fishing, and Robinson-type tourism, or as ecotourism or naturism. Specific types of tourism with activities related to social resources is described in traditional reference as congress, cultural, gastronomy, religious, or events tourism. However, it seems that these traditional types of tourism have been segmented in the meantime into even smaller niches. **There are practically no adjectives that can describe a specific activity or tourist interest that has not been connected with the noun *tourism*.** That is why special interest tourism became a hot topic.

Alternative tourism

Tourism demand

Heterogeneous demand

Specific types of tourism

Special interest tourism

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1.3. The challenges of protection and using heritage in tourist products

The aim of this chapter is to inform readers about the concept, elements, characteristics, perspectives and levels of a tourist product, especially in terms of using heritage and developing creative tourist products.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- present the concept and elements of a tourist product
- explain the challenges of managing specific characteristics of a tourist product as a service
- describe the value and advantages of providing complex tourist products
- point out the different levels of complexity in a tourist product
- present the possibilities for turning a tourist product into a creative product
- interpret the opportunities for co-creation in a tourist product

Special interest tourism could potentially solve **the issue of protection and use of heritage in tourist products, depending on the products' character**. That is why the question of what exactly a tourist product is must be addressed. There are different levels in understanding this concept. It seems that tourist product should be defined as a service, not a product. Namely, although some services offered to tourists have an important material aspect, such as food and drink in catering, it is the experiential aspect that adds value to such a service. That is why **the traditional tourist product should be perceived as an experiential category**.

In this sense, **a tourist product can be defined as a complex of material and non-material deliverables with the goal of creating an experience that transcends preconceived tourist expectations**. Tourist product - as a combination of preconceived expectations and perception of an experience - can include different natural and cultural heritage resources in a less invasive way. Namely, it depends equally on forming expectations

Special interest
tourism

Tourist product

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

as it does on the creation of experiential perception. Also, both aspects **strongly depend on creating a high level of added value, narrow focus on a chosen market segment and focused satisfaction of particular needs.**

Every **tourist product which includes natural and cultural heritage is a set of various material and service contents.** They incorporate heritage in different ways: directly or indirectly. That is why their impact on heritage may be different, too. Setting up and building hospitality facilities in cultural-historic monuments or on protected natural areas is the most common example of the direct use of material heritage. The same applies to sightseeing tourist attractions which include any heritage content or institution. Indirect use of heritage is in the creation of ambiance, different activities or creative contribution to a tourist product. Also, it is important to remember that **in tourist products it is necessary to manage their service component with extra care.**



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

The service component of tourist products is related to specific characteristics of services. **In tourism, the most important are intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. Spatial and time difference between making a decision and actually taking a trip must be considered.** This additionally burdens the natural and cultural heritage that is the base of tourist products. However, understanding and applying principles of service component management helps in the sustainable use of heritage in tourism.

Unlike material products, tourist services are non-material and cannot be tried out prior to consumption. Although this creates a sense of risk and discomfort in users, it decreases the pressure of testing the product for users to be assured of their quality. In the process of

Natural and cultural heritage

Specific characteristics of services

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

intangibility management, **it is necessary to create as clear an image of the service offered as possible.** This can usually be achieved by quality communication with users in time before and after the purchase. If a tourist product incorporates any form of heritage, **the communication process can include some form of virtual heritage consumption.** This can decrease tourist pressure on critical points during the actual consumption. Increased scope of communication and multimedia content provided by contemporary technology works towards this goal. Also, some of this content can be generated by users themselves.

Still, tourism as a concept always includes the arrival of tourists into a tourism destination in person and cannot be reduced to a virtual experience. The tourist experience assumes simultaneous presence of both service provider and user during the service exchange. If the tourist product is based on heritage, it means that service transaction includes heritage content. Inseparability management means **constant improvement of the competences of the staff that are in direct contact with users.** They are, after all, a critical part of a tourist product and the quality of their interaction with users determines the experience of service quality. In this interaction they **must interpret heritage content appropriately, but even more importantly, prevent any form of damage to that heritage.**



Photo: Jošt Gantar, Slovenska turistična organizacija

Due to a high level of personal interaction of service provider staff, it is impossible to avoid the variability in the quality of the delivered content. It depends on several external and personal factors. For example, it is almost impossible to expect a tour guide to interpret some heritage content in a completely identical way every time. Sometimes an adjustment will be needed due to weather conditions, user demand, or

Intangibility

Inseparability

the guide's fatigue. That is why **services with a high level of interaction with guests need the development of interpersonal skills. With services that have a low level of contact, the problem of variability can be solved by employing standard operating procedures.**

One of the most challenging things about tourist services is their perishability. Namely, an unsold seat in a transport vehicle or an unsold hotel room cannot be stored for sale at another time. That is why it is very important for hospitality and tourism service providers to consider ways to manage capacities at their disposal. The same applies to heritage. Even when the capacity of an area that includes natural or cultural heritage seems to be limitless, it is not so. That is why **different tools, usually used in the management of tourism capacities, can be very helpful in reducing the pressure of too many tourists on heritage sites.**

The development of tourist products that include heritage needs to be approached based on the understanding of the product's various perspectives. For a heritage institution, a tourist product is identical to a ticket or a tourist visit, for a restaurant it is a meal, and for a hotel an overnight stay. For a tourism destination, it is a set of goods, services, content and activities that tourists can use, while for a tourist it is a very personal experience of enjoying chosen goods, services, content and activities. **The way tourists include heritage in their personal experience depends primarily on them, but also on the complexity level of a tourist product they use.**

The more complex tourist products always include a higher level of added value, as well as a high level of coordination between several services and service providers. That enables better effects in the use and protection of natural and cultural heritage that tourists visit. For example, the flow in individual arrivals of tourists who only visit a heritage institution is far more difficult to balance with sustainable development goals and heritage protection than the more complex tourist products. They always **include several components (services) as well as the service of content creation, planning and organizing, which enables managing tourist movements in a destination.** Also, complex tourist products can **create a reason to visit a destination in periods when the demand is lower or non-existent.**

With complex tourist products the creation of a reason to visit a tourism destination is a standard, while with simple tourist products it is an exception. That is why **the most important complex tourist products include package tours, conferences and congresses, as well as other events.** Organizers of such products take responsibility for tourists' complete experience. This includes taking care of meaningful synchronization of services in time and space and attracting tourists in

 Variability

 Perishability

 Product's various perspectives

 Complex tourist products

 Creation of a reason to visit

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times and into areas where they would not go on their own. **When this includes heritage resources, it means that they are a part of a tourist product in a way that brings maximum benefit and minimum risk and damage.** That above all refers to the possibility of dispersing visits in time/areas where individual visit intensity is low.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

In complex tourist products added value can be generated in various ways. Including cultural and natural heritage content can be a decisive factor of distinction, depending on the level of its use. **There are multiple levels of complexity, from basic and expected to additional and extended products.** Heritage content can be included in tourist products on any of these levels. It would be best to include it appropriately on every level, with **extra attention being given to heritage inclusion on higher levels.**

The simplest way to include natural and cultural heritage in a tourist product is on the basic product level. **It satisfies only basic tourist expectations and heritage content is specified as a part of the product.** That is why the potential absence of such content creates complaints on a quantitative level. However, inclusion of certain forms of heritage into a tourist product creates certain risks that need to be considered; for example, the risk of planned animal or plant watching not being possible, movable cultural heritage not being exhibited, etc.

Much greater challenges appear on the expected tourist product level. **It includes content and activities that tourists are used to, based on their previous experience with similar forms of natural and cultural heritage.** That is why it is extremely important to know the offer of similar tourist products that include heritage and users' previous experience with them. If that experience, along with inappropriate presentation of one's own

Added value

Basic product

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

product, created too high or unrealistic tourist expectations, they will complain on the quality level. That is why **caution is needed in original communication, where attributes that natural and cultural heritage within a tourist product does not possess cannot be added under any circumstance**. One must be very familiar with the way a similar heritage has been interpreted and which interpretation techniques have been used. It must also be considered that some groups will more likely accept traditional forms of personal interpretation, such as tour guide comments. Some will be disappointed if contemporary techniques, like virtual or augmented reality, are not employed, and some if creative techniques like storytelling are not used.

The simplest rise above the basic and expected levels is the additional product level. **The addition of an extra content creates added value for tourists and differentiates the product from their previous experience as well as from the competition**. This can be a gift, such as an appropriate souvenir, or an additional activity. Such activity should not be specified in the offer because it would make it a part of the basic product, and it should not be commonly found with the competition, since that makes it, something expected. When it comes to natural and cultural heritage, **the option of adding some unique activity will depend on several factors, but mostly on the creativity of the operational staff in the choice of the right moment and the right content**.

Creativity as a factor will be most important in forming an extended tourist product. Unlike additional products, here **it is not only a matter of choosing the right moment and the right content as a supplement, but about a continuous creative approach by the operational staff**. That is why in creating an extended product connected with cultural and natural heritage, it is vitally important to include top-notch curators, tour guides, tour managers, and rangers as heritage interpreters. They should be **able to employ all interpretation techniques into a unique experience which directly affects visitors' emotions**. Some believe it is necessary to systematically affect all human senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell), and this is possible to achieve with techniques like storytelling and storydoing.

This implies that tourist product, especially when it includes heritage, should be seen as a creative product. That applies primarily to cultural heritage, but also to using creative industries' content in the interpretation of natural heritage. In theory, **creative industries can participate in a tourist product in different ways**. That is why providing tourists with various services, or the creation of tourist products, can be seen as a part of creative economy as a global trend. In order for this to work, **creative thinking, approach and practices need to be used in every form of heritage inclusion** into a tourist product.

Expected product

Additional product

Extended product

Creative product

The simplest form is when creative products are used to provide tourists with services, with the goal of quality heritage interpretation. That can be the inclusion of heritage motives and/or practices into architectural solutions and interior design of catering facilities. It can also be the inclusion of visual as well as auditory experiences through sounds from nature or traditional music. The same applies to experiences based on tastes and smells: natural ingredients and traditional recipes simultaneously connect nature and non-material cultural heritage, while tactile experience can be achieved through participation in crafting traditional objects from natural materials.

It is common for cultural heritage **as a creative product to become a tourist attraction, and as such, attract both tourists and a part of a tourist product.** This does not include only cultural-historical heritage, but also contemporary cultural production. It is even more important to notice the possibility of using such a creative product as the main content of tourism offer and develop it with the goal of attracting tourists. It is then very common to combine elements of natural heritage and cultural production in the form of concerts and events in untouched nature or even areas or facilities of protected natural heritage.

The most complex **option is a tourist product which includes heritage that is a result of mutual activities and interaction between hosts, service providers, heritage institutions and tourists.** That is a co-creation of a tourist product as a special form of mass user participation. Some will question whether activities that include vulnerable nature and cultural heritage should include tourists. However, if they participate within the framework of well-developed and well-managed projects of citizen science and crowdsourcing, there are no obstacles to it. Also, it should not be ignored that **tourist motivation for traveling within special interest tourism is specific to one's profession, hobby or interest,** and that often means having competences needed for the inclusion into demanding professional and voluntary activities.

Heritage interpretation

Cultural heritage

Co-creation of a tourist product

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1.4. Challenges of developing tourist products in special interest tourism

The aim of this chapter is to inform readers about the challenges of developing tourist products in special interest tourism, especially in connection with reasons for and the perception of the benefits of traveling, the motivational process and differences in tourist behavior.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe reasons for traveling in special interest tourism
- explain the perception of benefits when making a decision about traveling
- point out the most important biological and social needs that influence traveling
- illustrate the difference between primary and secondary traveling motivation
- present what the differences in tourist behavior are based on
- interpret the role of specific competence holders in special interest tourism

Tourist products in special interest tourism are based on activities connected with personal affinities, hobbies or professions. Like with any other tourist journey, **special interest tourists travel in order to do an activity they cannot do at home or because it is more extensive, more attractive and/or cheaper elsewhere**. Of course, they do this if they have extra means left after dealing with life expenses. They are guided by an assumption that this expense will provide them with more benefit (pleasure) than if they spent it on something else. Also, they **need to have at least two days free of work, family or social commitments**.

With tourists who travel because of personal affinities, hobbies or profession, **the desire to do an activity outside their place of residence can be very strong**. The lack of means or free time will not be an insurmountable obstacle for going on a trip for them. If the perception of the benefits of traveling is very strong, people are ready to save even on basic life needs. It is even more common for people to consciously

Special interest
tourism

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

free themselves of work and family obligations in order to travel. **If the perception of the benefits of traveling is strong, tourists will more easily decide on taking a trip outside the high season.** It happens more often with tourists who have more funds at their disposal. That is why tourists motivated by special interests also tend to spend more.

It seems that the most important factor in making a decision about traveling is the perception of benefits. The question is what influences that perception and how. **Activities in a tourism destination are one way of satisfying needs created by a physical or psychological imbalance in a body, or between a body and its environment.** If people exhausted by everyday obligations decide that several days of rest in an idyllic tourism destination will bring them more pleasure than in an overcrowded urban area where they live, they will become tourists. The same applies to special interest tourism: if people with a high level of need to explore decide that birdwatching in the animals' natural habitat will bring them more pleasure than going through reference books and documentaries, they will become tourists.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Although **most tourists travel for rest and relaxation, there are many needs that encourage people to travel.** Traveling for rest and recreation is just an example of traveling in order to satisfy one's primary need to rest and sleep. **Traveling is often prompted by other biological needs.** These are the most commonly needs to protect one's body from illness or sexual needs. Long-term stay in a healthy climate or exposure to natural healing factors is the basic activity in health tourism. Sex tourism is, unfortunately, one of the negative effects of contemporary international tourism. **It seems, however, that special interest tourism is more motivated by primary social needs.**

Benefits of traveling

Perception of benefits

Biological needs

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

Traveling as a tourist is done to satisfy the need for change, entertainment and exploration. Staying in an environment different from one's residence can satisfy these needs. These social needs are also the most common motivation in special interest tourism. Through activities related to special interests, hobbies and professions in tourism destinations, it is possible to completely satisfy all three needs, especially the need to explore. That is why, as a rule, **products in special interest tourism include various educational or scientific activities on a larger scale than other tourist products.**



Photo: Domen Groegl, Zavod za turizem Maribor

Other primary social needs must not be forgotten. These are **the need for companionship, love, following social rules and success.** Namely, while traveling it is easier to make new acquaintances. Interaction with service providers is based on openness and kindness, and this reduces the feeling of loneliness and rejection. Sometimes traveling happens because a school, association, club or religious community organizes the trip, and participation means respecting social convention. Also, **special interest tourism can greatly satisfy the need for success:** a large number of activities are often directed towards an accomplishment in a hobby or profession and can even include some form of competition.

It is a logical conclusion that **the perception of the benefits of traveling will be stronger if the activity in a tourism destination handles the problem of an imbalance better. It is also logical to expect that a stronger perception of benefits will happen in cases of a stronger imbalance.** Tourists, though, rarely satisfy just one need during traveling. It is important to recognize

Social needs

Social convention

which need acts as a primary traveling motivation, but one must keep all other motives in mind. **Primary motivation defines the main activity and the reason for visiting a tourism destination.** However, which destination tourists will visit depends more on the activities available there. This applies equally to decision-makers and their traveling companions. That is how specific perception of benefits is defined for every destination that made the shortlist due to special interest activities.

Therefore, **the final decision of choosing a tourism destination depends on the level of specific perception of benefits that traveling to a certain destination will bring, since it is a combination of primary motivation (activity) and a set of secondary motivations (and activities).** However, there seem to be some individual differences between potential tourists during the decision-making process about traveling. Some people travel rarely, and when they do, they go to places they have visited before. These places are usually close to their residence, so they often use their own vehicles and spend relatively little money. Other people, however, travel often and like to explore new, faraway destinations. They buy last-minute travel deals, use planes and often spend more than they originally planned.

These conflicting patterns of behavior are extreme examples of psychocentric and allocentric behavior. **In the former case, potential tourists have a greater fear of the unknown compared to their desire to get to know it, while the latter case is the opposite. It is a conflict of simultaneous attraction and rejection motivations.** On the one hand, a person wants to travel in order to satisfy their need, while on the other, they fear change. **If the fear of change is stronger, a journey will not take place.**

One must **be able to recognize people whose fear of change and the unknown may block the decision to travel.** Such fear, especially related to visiting faraway places, is more common with the elderly, people with a lower level of education, less informed and uncommunicative people. In other words, **people who will be easier to inspire to travel and spend money, even in faraway destinations, are younger, better educated people, who are well-informed and inclined to communicate with others.** In general, tourists who travel because of their specific activities within tourism framework primarily lean towards allocentric behavior.

Individual differences in the behavior of potential travelers may not be only psychographic. **There are other reasons that can encourage or deter people from traveling or visiting certain tourism destinations.** For example, traveling to warmer areas is often done by people from unfavorable climates. People living in overcrowded urban areas often travel more to untouched natural areas. Families with small children

Primary traveling
motivation

Secondary
motivations

Psychocentric
behavior

Allocentric
behavior

Differences in the
behavior

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

adjust a decision about a destination according to child-appropriate activities they offer. **People traveling for their specific interests will choose destinations offering activities related to their interest, hobby or profession.**

With special interest traveling one needs to be very familiar with tourist target group in order to predict their behavior. Also, **it is possible to create a detailed subdivision within a targeted group into narrow niches.** For example, the interest in studying plant or animal life can be expressed on several levels. On the top are the leading world scientists, followed by experts- teachers and biologists. Then there are biology college students, amateurs in plant and animal watching, then all pupils who have biology as a school subject. Finally, one should consider people who want to discover something previously unknown in nature.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Such stratification is possible for any special interest, profession or hobby. Of course, one must consider very narrow specializations. Instead of general interest in observing plants and animals, such target groups can be subdivided by their interest in birds, sea mammals, or large beasts. **Motivation process in tourists with varied interests can be completely different.** However, even greater motivation difference can happen due to the position on the stratification pyramid. Motivation for visiting a tourism destination will not be the same for students and leading world scientists, even when both groups are drawn to the same attraction. That is why **one must thoroughly study the target group for which special interest tourism is being developed.**

There are various ways to gain such knowledge, but ultimately, all have strong connections to a specific interest, hobby or profession. That is

Target group

Narrow specializations

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

why **when developing special interest tourist products in a destination, the greatest challenge is in finding people in the destination itself who have the same interests, hobbies or profession as the potential tourists.** Based on their reactions, it is possible to create a framework of needs and behaviors of potential tourists. Also, such people are often strongly involved in communities and groups that are connected by traditional or modern networking. Sometimes these are **associations, clubs, or chambers, sometimes certain magazines, portals, blogs or simply social networking groups.** All these can be a source of useful information about potential tourists.



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Within special interest areas there are already profiled offers, recognizable tourism destinations and specific tourist activities' providers. It seems that over 150 areas of interest can be identified, where such tourist offers have been created and a relationship established between tourism supply and demand. That is why **partial information about potential offer can be gathered from the analysis of current tourism supply in special interest areas.** There are already tourism destinations which have been profiled as leaders in certain niche areas. Apart from supply analysis of such destinations, one can simply study their existing tourism demand related to a certain interest, hobby or profession.

A serious challenge for developing special interest tourism products is a lack of understanding of realistic market opportunities and potential, though it seems it can be rather easily overcome. First, with certain professions, it is not difficult to determine the number of experts on a national level, and often globally as well. The same applies to a large number of hobbies, regardless if the estimate is based on membership

Networking

Specific tourist activities' providers

Number of experts

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

in associations (hunters, fishermen, cyclists, birdwatchers, etc.). When it comes to even narrower interests, **the real potential can be determined through social networking presence and involvement.**

However, the existence of tourism offer in competing destinations and the potential demand does not simultaneously mean automatic generation of demand for tourist products in all destinations. **For special interest tourism products to develop in a destination, the creation of specific offer for particular special interest niche is necessary.** That is practically impossible without including and hiring people in the destination with the same interests, hobbies or professions as potential tourists. As specific competence holders, they need to be ready to develop a tourist product, but in order for that to happen, they also need competence for working with tourists. For example, every botanist, geologist, art educator or mountaineer will not necessarily be interested in or competent enough to develop a special interest tourist product.

It seems that **the process of motivation, inclusion and education of specific people with competences for working with tourists and creating tourist products is a critical challenge in developing special interest tourism.** Another challenge is recognizing market potential for a specific niche in special interest tourism. No less important is the challenge of getting to know potential customers well. However, **the whole set of challenges related to recognizing, registering and evaluating tourist attractions cannot be ignored,** since the development of special interest or any type of tourism depends on them. However, **the priority area is potential tourist attractions that mass tourists don't use.** Mass tourism is largely concentrated around several most important existing attractions at the same time, while special interest tourism is marked by great dispersion on a large number of potential tourist attractions throughout the year.

Such dispersion of attractions and their visiting time **creates excellent opportunities for the sustainable use of tourist attractions, but also great challenges in terms of activating their potential.** Firstly, there is the matter of identifying a number of potential attractions that could inspire visits by tourists. Secondly, there is the matter of physical accessibility, which includes information about their location. Finally, there is **the matter of appropriate interpretation of the value of certain assets for specific target groups.** All these are components of a database that should be created and maintained about potential tourist attractions, with the goal of evaluating their role in special interest tourism.

Unfortunately, creating and maintaining such a database on commercial principles is practically impossible. **Special interest tourism is characterized by a limited number of tourists, individual and small**

Specific competence holders

Special interest tourism

Potential attractions

group trips, as well as small-scale economy. That is why it is impossible to ensure the economic basis for such an undertaking, especially since it would be an extremely large database of tourist attractions. However, opportunities to solve this challenge can be offered by citizen science and crowdsourcing concepts. That is why it seems justified - **because of the new opportunities to create such a database- to reconsider the role of tourist attractions in the development of tourism, destination management and innovative tourist products development.** If the development of digital technologies that enable the use of multifunctional portable devices is considered too, it seems that a shift in key paradigms about using tourist attractions that may not have been so obvious has already happened.

Database of tourist
attractions

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What is special interest tourism and why is it so popular?

<https://tourismteacher.com/special-interest-tourism/>



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2. A tourist attraction database in the development of tourist products

Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Introduction

Creating a tourist attraction database is not a simple task, but the use of digital technologies and citizen science methods facilitates the process. For this reason, characteristics and components of tourist attraction databases are presented in the first part of this chapter, taking into account the user's needs. The role and complexity of such databases are particularly highlighted, and numerous challenges, critical phases, and possibilities of growth are presented.

Many tourism destinations suffer from the effects of demand-driven tourism. It is not easy, but it is possible to a certain extent, to manage tourism demand. This is why the possibility of managing the development of tourism based on tourist activities that are not related to free time and leisure is presented in the second part of this chapter. Special attention is devoted to issues of systematic identification and the use of potential tourist attractions to develop new tourist activities.

Tourist attractions are important comparative advantages of every tourism destination, and the optimal management of tourist attractions is a key factor in tourism development. This is why the possibility of using tourist attraction databases for the development of innovative tourist products is presented in the third part of this chapter. The possibility of creating tourist products that enable a dispersion of tourist activities is particularly highlighted.

The innovative and creative development of new tourist products should be based on creativity and creative processes, as well as the carrying capacity of tourist attractions and destinations. The existence of a tourist attraction database contributes to this significantly. This is why the final part of this chapter presents an innovative and creative process for the development of tourist products, based on a tourist attraction database.

2.1. The challenges of creating a tourist attraction database

The aim of this chapter is to present readers with the characteristics, components, and user needs, and the role and complexity of tourist attraction databases, especially with regards to challenges, critical phases and possibilities of their development.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe the characteristics and components of contemporary databases
- explain the role and complexity of tourist attraction databases
- point out the most important challenges of creating a tourist attraction database
- present critical phases of the development of tourist attraction databases
- illustrate the needs of a tourist attraction database users
- interpret the possibilities of using existing and developing new databases

A database is not just any set of data. Even before computers, collections of data existed; however, they did not have the characteristics of contemporary databases. **A database is defined as an organized and systematically ordered set of interrelated entries stored in a computer-readable medium.** A database must possess some important characteristics. Primarily, it has to be an organized collection of logically related data. This interdependent data should be accessible and suitable for search, sorting, and processing to obtain different reports, overviews, and analytical reviews.

A tourist attraction database has to meet all these criteria. It should be considered that a single record (entity) in such databases is a tourist attraction. Since **tourist attractions are very diverse occurrences, creating a tourist attraction database is a very complex task.** Namely, every tourist attraction (as a whole) should be described in a database with its properties (attributes), which presents a serious challenge. A large number of attributes for describing tourist attractions will be different for different types of attractions. Simultaneously, **the total number of attractions of each particular type can be extremely large.** This makes the process of identifying and recording tourist attractions

Set of data

Tourist attractions

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

more complicated. It seems that because of all this, despite the efforts to establish a traditional register and atlas of tourist attractions, it has not been successful so far.

However, **contemporary databases rely on the more developed technologies that can without serious difficulties store and process a large scope of entries, have very different records, and record different properties for individual tourist attractions as a whole.** Additionally, any contemporary database can, without any serious difficulty, include not only textual data and a large scope of photo, video, and audio content, but also data on the geo-location of tourist attractions. Even more than that, contemporary databases can also contain different transactional information about messages that are exchanged and delivered, the statuses and the rights of users, etc.

A tourist attraction database that could fulfill its role in the development of tourism would have to enable all functions of contemporary databases. Primarily, this includes **easy access to, entry and change of data, and storage of a large quantity of data in different formats (including multimedia data).** The data has to be unique and very well organized in order to provide easy searching, sorting, and filtering, as well as saving memory space. Additionally, it is necessary to provide a high level of safety and data protection as well as simultaneous user access.



Photo: Vid Ponikvar, Zavod za turizem Maribor

Databases

Tourist attraction database

Some of **the most important challenges of creating a tourist attraction database include its creation, filling, and use**. Even databases that are easy to create are often not used optimally or at all because they are not filled with enough data or the data is not relevant. Even when this challenge is resolved, some databases are still not used optimally, and are often not even updated and maintained regularly. This is why it is most important that **an owner of a project to form a tourist attraction database is an organization that will have adequate benefits from its use in tourism development activities and tourism management in a destination**. These are usually tourist boards or destination management organizations.

When solving challenges in starting a project of forming a tourist attraction database, it is necessary to deal with several key assumptions. Primarily, this includes **the provision of necessary capacities on a computer, and/or an adequate server that will enable the storage of the expected quantity of data**. The next assumption is the development of programming tools that will enable database management. This program should provide data input, editing, display, search, and filtering. In addition to downloading data and creating reports, the program should also provide protection of data integrity, control of simultaneous data access, and protection against unauthorized use. In any case, it is necessary to ensure the control of the database as well as its restoration in case of unauthorized intrusion and “collapse” of the database and/or data.

A particularly big **challenge is the organization of collecting, entering, and controlling the accuracy and relevance of the entered data about tourist attractions**. This is a procedure that, given the scale and great variety of tourist attractions in a tourism destination, can be extremely demanding and/or expensive. This is probably the reason why tourist boards that could provide all the technical conditions did not initiate similar projects. Fortunately, **the use of citizen science and crowdsourcing methods can successfully solve this challenge at minimal cost**. If they connected with vocational education for tourism and various associations, and even with the tourists themselves, it would be possible to provide this valuable tool for the tourism destination management without significant costs, while simultaneously achieving additional non-economic positive effects.

Due to the use of citizen science and crowdsourcing methods, a great challenge would be to clearly manage a project, define procedures, authorizations, and responsibilities, as well as to use the advantages of a tourist attraction database. For this, it would be of particular importance to use an appropriate application that would enable the use of the database following the given procedures authorizations, and responsibilities of all users, regardless of whether their goal is non-economic or economic in nature. Special challenges would also be related

Tourist boards

Programming tools

Tourism destination

Sustainable project management

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

to long-term sustainable project management, because the creation of a tourist attraction database should be **a long-term project with multiple benefits for the public and private sectors in tourism.**

Developing a database involves going through some critical stages. First of all, there is the precise planning stage of the project in which the questions of what needs to be done, by whom and where, in what time frame, by which means and with what goal should all be clearly answered. **The most important step in database development is to analyze the users' needs.** In the case of tourist attractions, the most important users are destination management organizations (DMO) as carriers of tourism development and destination management. There are also destination management companies (DMC) and other direct service providers in tourism that will develop tourist products based on the data from a tourist attractions database. Finally, there are **tourists themselves who will use the database as a source of ideas when planning their activities or a better understanding of the attractions in a tourist destination.** Local residents could also be encouraged to use the database as a tool to monitor heritage damage or pollution.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

The task of designing and constructing a tourist attraction database is a multidisciplinary collaboration between IT and tourism experts, and can be demanding from the aspect of office hours and professional challenges. Namely, too many demands for additional functionalities and ways of using a tourist attraction database can increase the workload to the extent that the project becomes irrational. This is why **the creation and realization require special attention to be devoted only to the most important critical functionalities,** and not to all the possibilities that the

Destination management organizations

Destination management companies

Tourist attraction database

construction and implementation of a new tourist attraction database can create. Namely, a part of functionality can be left to future activities of the database development.

In order to conduct the process of implementation adequately, the functionality of a database needs to be tested multiple times in the real environment. It is also possible to use crowdsourcing activities in this process. **Using a tourist attraction database primarily refers to a well-organized process of getting to know, educating, organizing, and motivating a wide group of people who can realize their interests in different ways by using the database.** To achieve this, it is required to develop adequate promotional campaigns, strategies, and communication tactics, as well as appropriate educational materials. They need to include the acquisition of more broadly defined learning outcomes related to the importance, role, and possibilities of using a tourist attraction database, as well as practical instructions for using the application.

Of course, instead of constructing a new tourist attraction database with all its elements, it is **possible to look for already formed attraction databases and assess a possibility of using already developed tools.** It would be good if the tools included a complete package of technical, organizational and educational solutions. This particularly refers to those developed in the process of open innovations, because for the holders of such innovations, a possibility for a new implementation creates a possibility for further development and improvement of the solutions. **One such tourist attraction database was developed within the InnoVET project for tourism in collaboration between Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije, Zavod za turizam iz Maribora, Ericsson Nikola Tesla d.d., Ferial d.o.o. Karlovac, Gostur from Maribor, Trgovačko-ugostiteljska škola Karlovac, Srednja škola za gostinstvo in turizam from Maribor, and Ugostiteljsko-turistička škola from Belgrade.**

Process of implementation

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Što je Baza podataka i koje 4 vrste baza podataka poznajemo?

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10 public data repositories related to tourism

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2.2. Managing tourism development and tourist activities based on a tourist attraction database

The aim of this chapter is to present readers with the tourism development management, which is based on tourist activities unrelated to free time and leisure, especially in terms of systematic identification and use of potential tourist attractions.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe the characteristics of tourism demand and challenges that arise from it
- explain the concept of tourist leisure and non-leisure activities
- present the significance of the development of tourist non-leisure activities
- point out the effects of local blindness in identifying tourist attractions
- illustrate the importance of a systematic approach in identifying tourist attractions
- Interpret the advantages of using detailed tourist attraction classifications

Being a complex phenomenon of contemporary society, tourism has numerous positive and negative effects. For this reason, it is necessary to actively manage tourism development. Unfortunately, since tourism as a phenomenon is usually guided by demand, this is not always an easy task. **Tourism demand is extremely mobile and easily changes course.** This equally refers to the choice of destinations and to the starting and stopping of tourist flows. Namely, due to any unfavorable circumstances in one tourism destination, the demand easily moves to another. Also, due to the occurrence of circumstances unfavorable to tourism (war, terrorism, health risks), the demand drops sharply, just as it suddenly reappears after the end of such circumstances. Additionally, **tourism demand is massive and tends to concentrate around the main tourist attractions of a region.**

Tourism demand

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

Given that the tourism offer must be adapted to the characteristics of tourism demand and **the development of tourism in a region depend on these characteristics, this should also be taken into account when managing tourism development.** Above all, these characteristics include the extreme changeability and the seasonal nature of the demand, as well as problems of spatial concentration around the most important tourist attractions. Challenges arising from volatility and seasonality are particularly expressed in the case of overdependence on tourism income, while the **challenges arising from the problem of spatial concentration are particularly pronounced due to the overcapacity of tourist attractions and overtourism in general.**

Data-based tourism development management can help solve the aforementioned challenges, especially concerning data obtained from a tourist attraction database. Namely, tourist attractions are the main reason for visiting a region, and their characteristics determine the scope and intensity of tourist activities. **Good knowledge of the characteristics of all tourist attractions in a tourism destination facilitates the process of making developmental decisions about tourism and activities that can develop within a tourism destination product.** This enables timely recognition of the potential of different leisure activities that draw attention to larger groups of tourists, as well as leisure and non-leisure activities that attract narrower market niches.

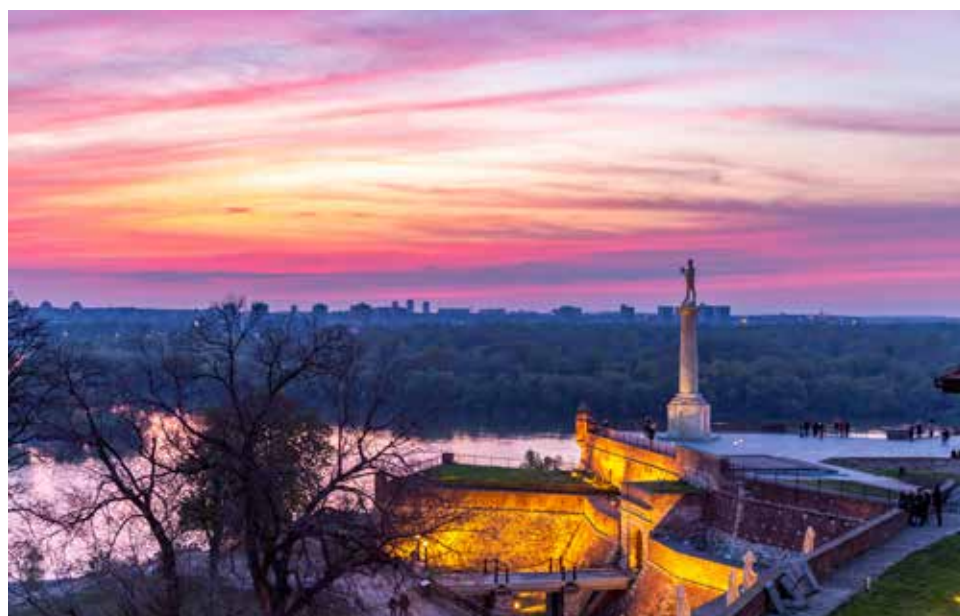


Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Leisure activities are mainly activities that refer to spending free time (vacation, relaxation, recreation), and non-leisure activities refer to other reasons for tourist travels (medical treatments, shopping, education). Logically, **leisure tourist activities primarily occur in free time; when tourists are free from their business, social, and family obligations in the**

Tourism offer

Tourism development management

place of their residence. In other words, at the weekend, on holidays, and on vacation. Some leisure activities do not follow this pattern. That is, for example, the case of education during free time, or travelling related to a particular interest, where there is an exceptionally high level of tourist motivation. **The usual journeys for reasons unrelated to leisure are taken regardless of free time.**

Knowledge about which tourist attractions enable the realization of leisure activities for narrow market niches or the realization of non-leisure tourist activities can significantly affect important decisions about the development of tourism in a tourism destination. **The emphasis on the development of these activities can help to avoid the seasonal pressure of mass tourism and affect the attraction of less mobile and less price-elastic segments of tourism demand.** Additionally, better recognition of a larger number of tourist attractions that enable such activities can provide a dispersion of tourist activities not only in time, but also in a wider tourism destination area. This **can solve the problem of an inadequate pressure of tourist movements on several most important tourist attractions**, as well as significantly expand the effect of economic benefits from tourism to less developed tourism regions.

As an important source of information for decision-making, a tourist attraction database can be systematically developed, filled, and updated. Namely, in **the case of tourist attractions and activities that enable tourism development for narrower market niches or the implementation of non-leisure tourist activities, the so-called local blindness appears.** Without adequate tools for recognition and evaluation, most such sites remain only potential attractions, often completely neglected or in the shadow of the attractions that draw the demand as real tourist attractions.

Although every plan of tourism development starts by analyzing the attraction database, it is almost always **made, due to time and financial limitations, as well as the planning development phase, based on the most appealing smaller number of real tourist attractions, and it very rarely includes a wider range of the potential tourist attractions.** Even when, methodologically correctly, wider groups of local tourism stakeholders are involved in the process of identifying important tourist attractions, the effect of local blindness increases. Namely, only a systematic approach to identifying tourist attractions based on detailed classifications and with the **participation of experts from different fields of study that are seemingly unrelated to tourism can help to identify a larger number of potential attractions.**

Therefore, for the proper recognition of attractions in the field of intangible heritage, ethnographers, anthropologists, and historians should be included, just as in the recognition of natural heritage

Leisure tourist activities

Non-leisure tourist activities

Local blindness

Plan of tourism development

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

attractions, biologists, geologists, and geographers should be included. This is not done in the usual process of strategic and developmental tourism planning. However, in the systematic development of a tourist attraction database, this is a common procedure. Therefore, in **properly formed tourist attraction databases, a far greater number of potential than real tourist attractions are identified**. A systematic approach using detailed classifications of attractions when forming a tourist attraction database enables the inclusion of a wide range of different tourist attractions and activities that can be associated with them.

One of these detailed classifications of tourist attractions was created by Eduard Kusen. For example, in his classification, it is possible to identify as many as 19 different categories of tourist attractions in the group of geological features of an area, and as many as 17 different categories in the group of hydrological phenomena. When it comes to plant life as a tourist attraction, there are 13 different categories, and in the group of animal life, there are 16 categories. It should not be surprising then that there are as many as 39 different categories among the attractions related to the culture of life and work. **In order not to avoid the recognition of the content related to non-leisure activities, Kusen's detailed classification even recognizes the concept of tourist para-attractions, among which, for example, health institutions are classified as the basis of health tourism.**



Photo: Stanko Kozel, Slovenska turistična organizacija

Tourist attraction databases, which are based on such detailed classifications, could provide a clear image of the real potential of attractions during development planning. Additionally, **if systematically guided and maintained, they would greatly facilitate every future process of analysis of resources for the creation of new plans for tourism development, as well as the creation of spatial plans and other planned documents for tourism**. It should not be forgotten that such detailed databases can also be used for the needs of the private sector in the field of business planning and the development of new tourism products.

Recognition of attractions

Detailed classifications of tourist attractions

Tourist attraction databases

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Oblikovanje in izdelava turističnih produktov in turističnih paketov ter strategije trženja le-teh

https://kastelir.eu/media/uploads/files/%C5%A0tudija%20o%20turisti%C4%8Dnih%20produktih_kon%C4%8Dna.pdf

2.3. The use of tourist attractions databases in the development of tourist products

The aim of this chapter is to present readers with the possibilities of using tourist attraction databases for the development of innovative tourist products, particularly the ones that enable a dispersion of tourist activities.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe the characteristics and relationship of tourist activities and tourist attractions
- explain why the development of new tourist activities is an important competitive advantage
- present the use of tourist attraction databases for the development of innovative activities
- illustrate the use of tourist attraction databases in the dispersion of tourist activities
- point out the significance of tourist attractions in comparison with other tourism resources
- interpret the issues that need to be addressed by the creators of tourist products

The research indicates the fact that contemporary tourists **consume a larger number of different activities than they used to** during a single tourist journey. Simultaneously, the numbers of offered activities in tourism destinations are increasing, as well as the variety of tourist activities based on which tourism destinations compete on the tourism market. Considering the fact that the number of different types of special interest tourism will continue to grow as a consequence, **the development of a wide range of tourist activities will be of particular importance for the competitiveness of each tourism destination.**

Contemporary tourists

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

An important element of the destination's competitiveness is the existence of comparative advantages, and these are the resources on which the development of tourism is based. Given that **the most important tourist resources are tourist attractions, it is only logical to conclude that the optimal management of tourist attractions is a key factor in tourism development.** However, tourist attractions in themselves are not the reason for visiting a tourism destination. The reason is the **activities related to the tourist attraction and activities with which tourists satisfy some of their needs.** The fact that such activities are only possible in a destination, or are more attractive or extensive than elsewhere, creates an important assumption for achieving a competitive advantage on the tourism market.

Activities related to tourist attractions are the essence of every tourist product's content, and for a tourist product to be competitive, they must be unique. Designing new unique activities is not an easy task. It is especially difficult due to the constant pressure from the competition. Namely, **tourist products are extremely easy to copy and it is practically impossible to protect copyright on a unique combination of content or activities because even the smallest change represents a new product.** That is why there is a strong pressure to continuously improve the existing and develop new offer when creating complex tourism products, especially excursions, package tours, events and conferences.



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

Such pressure comes not only from competitors within tourism destinations, but also from competitors located in other destinations. In addition, the life cycle of complex tourist products is very short and the pressure to innovate on an annual basis is common. **For the creators of tourist products, this means that they must constantly search for new ideas that will enable the innovation of existing and the development of new tourist products.** It seems that this is one of the critical steps in

Tourism destination's competitiveness

Tourist product

Life cycle of complex tourist products

the product development process, and its importance will not diminish in the future. Therefore, **designing new unique tourist activities based on available tourist attractions is among the important competitive capabilities.**

Creativity in designing new activities at recognized, real tourist attractions will be equally important as designing activities at potential attractions that are not yet included in tourism offer. However, **the development of new tourist activities related to potential tourist attractions seems to offer more opportunities.** Namely, in destinations with a larger number of potential than real tourist attractions, competition for potential ones as resources will be much easier than competing for the existing ones. For this reason, **the issue of systematic identification of potential tourist attractions appears again as one of the key challenges.**

Properly designed and organized tourist attraction databases should contain more information about potential than actual tourist attractions. In this way, **they can serve as an important platform for searching and analyzing the overall potential of the attractions in a tourism destination in the function of developing new tourist products.** Namely, the most important questions that travel organizers must ask themselves in the development of new tourist products are: what we have, what we can do with it and who might be interested in it. In the process of developing ideas for new tourist products, it is necessary to create as many ideas as possible that give clear answers to these questions, and in the following stages of product development, the ideas with the best market potential can be selected.

If a more complex classification of tourist attractions was used in the process of collecting data and updating the tourist attraction database for the systematic classification of attractions, the scope of potential ideas would be greater. **With a wider group of experts and passionate volunteers participating in data collection and expert assessment of individual attractions, the value of potential tourist attractions for the tourist groups that new products target will be clearer.** Regardless of the fact that some tourist attractions may be interesting for some extremely narrow target consumer groups, this does not mean that they are not valuable for the development of new tourist products.

Activities and contents for some even relatively narrow target groups can be of exceptional importance, which needs to be determined in the process of marketing evaluation. Some activities and facilities will not be correlated with periods of high tourism demand when other necessary resources (accommodation capacities, traffic infrastructure, and other tourist amenities) are already overloaded. Therefore, **some tourist products that will attract a lower intensity of demand will be of great**

Creativity in designing

Tourist attraction databases

Questions in the development of new tourist products

What we have?
What we can do with it?
Who might be interested in it?

Classification of tourist attractions

Marketing evaluation

importance, due to their ability to engage accommodation, transportation and facilities that would otherwise remain unused. The same effect can be achieved by the activation of potential tourist attractions in those areas where the intensity of tourist flows is otherwise low.

Developing new and refreshing existing tourist products is an extremely dynamic process, and it is especially difficult in circumstances when the resource basis of the tourism destination is scarce. However, sometimes **this scarcity is only an illusion due to inadequate identification of potential tourist attractions.** This problem can certainly be solved by a systematic use of tourist attraction databases. However, it would be completely wrong to perceive a tourist attraction database as a short-term and one-time project. Namely, **only a dynamically set tourist attraction database that is constantly updated and supplemented with new entries can provide a constant source of new ideas for the development of tourist products.**



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Therefore, the question arises whether there are limitations in defining a set of tourist attractions in a certain area. At first glance, it would be logical to assume that it is a limited set, however extensive it may be. However, it seems that even in the smallest tourism destinations with very limited resources, it is impossible to determine the ultimate limits of potential tourist attractions. Namely, **individual attractions lose or gain importance depending on the context of observation, historical development, ways of presentation, possibility of interpretation, and even from the creation of artificial tourist attractions.**

By shifting the interest in the development of attractive tourism content from the physically accessible, material area to the non-material, intellectual, virtual, and even spiritual sphere, the observation of tourist attractions and the development of new tourist products are practically limitless. That will certainly present a major challenge in the development,

Resource basis of the tourism destination

Tourist attractions

New tourist products

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

maintenance and use of tourist attraction databases in the future. **For this reason, they should not be closed and final, but open systems that will enable the input and search of a practically infinite amount of data.**

Even before the appearance of contemporary databases and GIS based on information technologies, there were ways of collecting and recording various data, including their mapping. When it comes to tourist attractions, at the turn of the twenty-first century, Eduard Kusen described the purpose, management system, structure and content of the register and atlas of tourist attractions. Unfortunately, that idea never took root in practical application, although the reasons and advantages of using the tourist attraction register and atlas were the same as they are today. However, **the use of contemporary tourist attraction databases that include various associated data formats, including multimedia, and attraction location data for tourism product development provide entirely new opportunities.**

The mere existence of a contemporary digital tourist attraction database can be the basis for the innovative development of tourist products. This does not only refer to the mix of content in the tourism destination product, the individual tourist product as offered by tourism companies, but also to the individual and personalized tourist experience that is the result of the co-creation of various stakeholders in the tourism destination and the tourists themselves. In addition, a tourist attraction database can function as a digital platform with the purpose of identifying, recording, evaluating, sustainably using and protecting tourist attractions as a form of public digital tourism infrastructure.

Regarding the development of tourist products, a tourist attraction database can represent a major source of ideas for their development. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that tourist consumption and **tourist flows must ultimately be realized in a real, physical space.** Namely, tourism and tourist trips imply movement outside the place of usual residence to the place providing tourist experience. These experiences are always related to the tourism destination area and are determined in space by their position and boundaries. **Tourist attractions, just like activities related to them in space, appear in the form of a certain point, line or surface.**

The activities that tourist products are based on, depending on their manifestation in space (point, line or surface), also affect other characteristics of the tourist product, primarily the intensity and manner of tourist movements in space. **This strongly affects the need for other resources in tourism destination area, as well as their concentration close to the main attractions.** Therefore, it is not unusual for the main hospitality facilities, transport infrastructure and other amenities to

The register and atlas of tourist attractions

Innovative development of tourist products

Digital platform with the purpose of

identifying, recording, evaluating, sustainably using and protecting tourist attractions

Tourist attraction database

Tourist products

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

appear in concentric circles around the point of tourist interest, to create layers in the linear attraction, or to **occupy parts of the area where the attraction itself is located or represented.**

Product development based on material immovable cultural and historical heritage whose location can be precisely determined by geographical coordinates is not the same as in the case of **observing a climate phenomenon or an endangered animal species for which there is only a probability of occurrence in a certain area in space.** The same **applies to intangible cultural heritage.** In its manifestations, it includes a certain cultural space or the space where a particular local community lives. Therefore, determining the places where it is presented is critical for the development of the tourist product. In a similar way, **this applies to movable material cultural heritage as well.** These instances present challenges that the creators of tourist products must face.



Photo: Sam Strauss, www.dravabike.si

A large part of the challenges in understanding, locating and choosing the optimal way of interpreting a certain tourist attraction can be solved by **using a tourist attraction database, which also contains data on its unique location or on all locations where it is available.** This enables the creators of tourist products to enable the dispersion of tourist activity in the surrounding area, thus reducing the pressure on the already recognized places of interest. **The information contained in the multimedia content in the tourist attraction database accelerates the recognition of their value and the determination of appropriate tourist activities.** This accelerates the process of developing production concepts, and the process of developing a new tourist product as a whole.

The development of every tourist product begins with the analysis of the resource database of the tourism destination. There are **a number of resources that are needed to create a competitive tourist product.** Some

Probability of occurrence

Dispersion of tourist activities

Analysis of the resource database

are better described as basic prerequisites for the arrival of tourists. These are the preserved environment, traffic location and connectivity, communal infrastructure and spatial arrangement. An important prerequisite for the stay of tourists is the quality of space organization, design of facilities and green areas. We should not forget the peacetime situation, political stability and a satisfactory level of personal and health safety. **It can be said that the aforementioned resources act as hygiene factors. If they exist, no one pays too much attention to them, but if they are not present, they can interrupt or hinder tourist flows.**

Some resources directly affect the possibility of tourist stay and the increase in the number of visitors to a tourism destination. These are catering facilities, travel agencies, skilled employees, tourist zones and various forms of tourism organization. Other important tourist resources are the tourist information system, the education of the local population, and even the attractiveness of the neighboring area. **These resources reduce or increase the competitiveness of the destination, and as part of the tourism value chain, they more or less affect the level of added value of tourism in the tourism destination.** However, the most important resources for the development of tourist products are tourist attractions. **Tourist attractions are those natural or social resources that can attract or already attract tourists to an area and on which tourist activities upon arrival in a destination are based.**

It should be emphasized again that tourists are attracted by the possibility of doing various activities that the tourist attraction allows them to do. The best **activities are those that they cannot do at their place of residence. If they can do this activity at home, then it is important that in the tourist destination it is more extensive, in a more attractive environment or cheaper.** The existence of a tourist attraction in itself means nothing if it cannot be linked to a tourist activity. Therefore, the first step in the development of tourist products is **the identification of tourist attractions in a destination and the activities that can be organized based on the available attractions.** If this procedure is part of a citizen science or crowdsourcing project and results in the form of a tourist attraction database, this significantly facilitates the creation of new tourist products for companies developing them.

Consequently, the creators of a tourist product can devote much more attention to the **question of what needs to be done to make the activity unique in the tourism destination, if it cannot be more extensive and in a more attractive environment than elsewhere.** This question does not usually get a simple answer. It is necessary to carefully study in advance where in the world such activities are offered, what makes them unique, how extensive they are, and in what environment they are carried out. Fortunately, it is no longer necessary to travel the world to determine

Tourism value chain

Tourist activity

Creators of a tourist
product

this. It is enough to have the time and sense when selecting keywords to use in **searching the Internet and comparing the observed activities with the possibilities offered by the tourist attraction recorded in the tourist attraction database.**

In the development of a tourist product, one must not forget the complex motivational process in making a decision about traveling. This means that already **during the development of a tourist product, care should be taken of all the prerequisites needed for undertaking tourist journeys and in considering the benefits it brings.** Facts related to incentives for undertaking tourist journeys based on primary biological and social needs and individual psychographic characteristics of each target tourist group need to be considered. Namely, **the fear of change and the unknown in some people can block the decision to go traveling.** Without an excellent knowledge of behavior in a selected target group of consumers, it is impossible to move to the next step in the development of tourist products.

Motivational process

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2.4. The innovative development of tourist products based on tourist attraction databases

The aim of this chapter is to present readers with the process of innovative and creative development of the concepts of tourist products based on tourist attractions databases.

After mastering the content of this chapter, reader will be able to:

- describe the criteria and approaches to calculating the carrying capacity for the development of a tourist product
- explain the significance of creative confidence for the innovative and creative product development
- point out the possibilities to create tourist experiences based on gamification
- illustrate the advantages of designer thinking in the development of tourist products
- describe the process of visualization and communication in the development of tourist products
- interpret the development process of the tourist product concept

When developing initial ideas for new tourist products, it is necessary to **analyze at a very early stage how the tourist product development affects the carrying capacity of the tourism destination and individual tourist attractions**. Carrying capacity is a concept that helps to determine how many tourists are acceptable in an area at the same time, before it starts to create negative effects. Unfortunately, **there are a number of criteria for calculating the carrying capacity**, so it sometimes seems that this is not the correct approach in defining the limit that should not be crossed during tourist visits to a region. Therefore, the concepts and criteria of physical, ecological, infrastructural, sociodemographic, and even perceptual carrying capacity are known, depending on the subjective tourist experience. Since **there are many criteria and methods**

Carrying capacity

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

for determining the carrying capacity, it is necessary to define the key criterion. If the acceptable number of tourists, based on one of the key criteria, is smaller than the others, it is the carrying capacity.

The concept of carrying capacity can be applied to a square, a building, a beach, a path or a meadow, but also to the entire tourism destination. When developing a new tourist product, only sustainable alternatives that will not exceed the carrying capacity should be considered. Depending on the type of product, the characteristics of the attractive base of a tourism destination and the perception of the role of tourism among the local population, it is necessary to **carefully determine which alternatives do not call into question long-term viability**. An excellent knowledge of the target tourist groups will be equally important for the final assessment. In addition to the activities they are engaged in, one should also know tourists' expectations, habits, wishes and past experiences. **If a tourist attraction database contains basic information about certain tourist attractions that can help in determining the critical carrying capacity, it will significantly facilitate and speed up, but even more importantly prevent giving superficial or wrong assessments.**



Photo: Turistička zajednica Karlovačke županije

The innovative and creative development of new tourist products must be based on creativity and creative processes. Most often the **people who embark on the development of new tourist products do not realize that the most common problem is a lack of creative confidence**. Therefore, they unimaginatively copy others or do nothing. Good and creative ideas for developing new tourist products are usually found where they are least expected. **They are found in activities that people do every day, which entertain, relax or simply make them happy. They are found in activities that people want to do, but for which they do not have time.**

Sustainable alternatives

Innovative and creative development

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

Ideas can also be found in the activities people dreamed about when they were children. **Due to local blindness, as well as to the neglect of some activities during the process of growing up, people often disregard numerous attractive contents in their environment.** Namely, that environment is no longer perceived as a place for leisure and free time. A systematically developed tourist attraction database can help solve this problem. In other words, **it is possible to approach the development of tourist products from the perspective of activities and interests of tourist service providers.**

Tourist products consist of intensive interaction between service providers and service users. **If a service provider does something that makes them tired or sad, or they consider boring or annoying, they transfer such emotions to their guests.** The creative process of designing a new tourist product should start from one's own dreams. The only question is what a person could do because it makes them happy, fulfills their childhood dreams, or relaxes them the most. Then one must ask where **the other people who want to do the same are. If they cannot do this at home, if it is more attractive, more extensive or cheaper in a tourism destination, they will probably become tourists.** A tourist product's creative development does not necessarily follow demand. **The creative development of a tourist product should create demand for products that do not yet exist, and ideas for such products can be found in a tourist attraction database,** primarily in the group of potential tourist attractions.

Tourism relies on leisure, rest and entertainment. More than anything else, tourists want service providers to have the same passion for the activities they will engage in together, and this should be incorporated into the process of developing new tourist products. **Starting this process is easiest if relying on fun, not logic.** When a person finds a job that entertains and relaxes them, they do not really have to work for the rest of their working life. The creation and implementation of tourist products is among the rare activities where this is possible. Unfortunately, **the social environment, especially the traditionally organized educational system and the norms that define the rules of behavior suppress creativity.** Over time, people suppress behaviors from times of their lives when they were the most creative. In that period, the need for exploration is extremely pronounced, the fear of the new is almost non-existent, and the need for fun, companionship and love is strong. It is the period of childhood, and **the activity in which children spend the most time satisfying their social needs is play.**

The development of a tourist product based on play contributes both to the quality and to the content orientation of the tourist product. Digital technologies even enable the development of specific approaches to the tourist product based on playing games (gamification). The very

Place for leisure

Interaction between service providers and users

Passion for the activities

Gamification

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

existence of a tourist attraction database in a tourist destination can be not only a basis for the development of ideas, but also a digital platform for the development of gamification-based tourist products. In this way, relationships, behaviors and elements typical for **tourist experiences based on created, digital, augmented reality, or a hybrid environment** can be included in the tourist product using digital technologies.

The creative development of a tourist product must include the sensations from all the senses. A tourist product that includes only what tourists can see and hear is boring. It is even worse if most of what tourists see and hear is verbalized. **Words cause rational reactions, and a real tourist product must contain emotional sensations.** This is much easier to achieve by watching a romantic sunset surrounded by the bright colors of the Mediterranean landscape and the gentle sound of the wind. Leaning against the rough texture of the stone walls, with the rich taste and smell of sheep's cheese and local wine, tourists will find themselves in a state that is difficult to describe in words. However, **knowledge about tourist attractions and their location which enables such an experience should be identified, located and recorded beforehand in a tourist attraction database.**



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

In recent times, the use of design thinking concept in the development of new products and services has been mentioned more and more often, and it finds its application in the development of tourist products. Within design as a discipline, some specific processes, concepts and approaches have been observed over time. **Designers have been found to have specific competencies and to apply specific practices that are described as a designer mindset or a design approach to solving challenges.** This is how the concept of design thinking was born. At present it is used in a much broader context, as a way of solving problems using the processes, concepts and approaches typically used by designers. **The development**

Sensations from all the senses

Design thinking concept

of new tourist products is nothing more than the design of intangible products, so it is quite logical to resort to an already developed method.

This method enables fast and efficient development of new as well as innovation of existing products and services. Given the characteristics of the tourism market and tourist products, this is a necessity. That is why there are numerous examples of solving challenges in tourism using the concept of design thinking. Of course, there are other concepts and methods that can be used. However, it seems that design thinking **can respond very well to the challenges of developing new tourist products, given that this concept is based on consideration, screening and evaluation of a large number of ideas in the process of product or service development.** The existence of a tourist attraction database as a source of a large number of ideas can significantly contribute to the use of this concept in the development of tourist products.

The thinking process in the development of a new tourist product must go through four stages in which some important questions must be answered. The first question is **what the present situation is.** In the second step, the question of **which product ideas can improve the existing situation should be answered.** In the third step, it is necessary to answer the question of **which ideas fascinate the most.** And finally, **which of the remaining ideas is even possible to implement.** Most of these questions can be answered by a well-structured, filled and maintained tourist attraction database, and these are the key questions that should be used in the creative decision-making process of developing a new tourist product.

Design thinking as a method gives priority to visualization and communication with intensive interaction. The key tools that will be used are based on this, and **multimedia and the location data from the tourist attraction database** can help in this. Visualization is the most important technique used by designers. It seems unusual to favor images over words in the development of intangible services. However, that is exactly what needs to be done. In addition to the fact that **images convey much more emotion than words, visualization allows the use of all the other tools of design thinking to see what is otherwise hidden.** Visualization can be achieved by creating complex collages of available photos or graphics, but also by simple drawings. The use of digital tools for the presentation of various visual records from the tourist attraction database accelerates this process. **The ability to additionally include artificial intelligence tools can make it even more effective.**

The first visualization to be made is about user experience. When developing a tourist product, the focus should be on activities that would bring tourists to a tourism destination. Namely, it is desirable to **identify**

Innovation of existing products and services

New tourist product

Visualization and communication

all the needs that a potential tourist would satisfy on a tourist trip and visually highlight the most important of them. Attention should be given to the needs that may remain hidden, to the difference in the intensity, sequence and frequency of meeting the needs. It is advisable to **mark all the emotional states that can appear during the stay, as well as what and who can cause them.** Most importantly, negative states should be identified and visually emphasized.

The second visualization should cover the value chain. This term includes partnership relations, and primarily the scope of associates and suppliers. It can also be applied at the industry or sector level. Since tourism is neither an industry nor a sector, **it is necessary to make a value chain analysis at the level of the tourism destination.** The tourism value chain is actually **a network through which partnership relations can be encompassed by depth (different providers of the same service or similar attractions) and by width (providers of different services and different attractions).** Not only service providers participate in the destination value chain, but also the public sector, infrastructure, utilities and numerous other resources play an important role.

The visualization of the tourism value chain can actually be in the form of a chain, and each stakeholder can be shown as one link. It is necessary to determine which links are the thinnest and which are missing. Then it is necessary to map patterns of behavior and relationships that arise **when there is an interaction between tourists and certain elements of the destination's value chain in the implementation of activities. In particular, the effects of these interactions and/or the effects of the absence of interactions should be visualized.** These effects can be positive or negative, and that information is the basis for the creation of a large number of ideas for the development of production concepts.

It is difficult to generate a large number of ideas for the product concept development alone. It is useful to utilize some of the well-known techniques, such as brainstorming. In interaction with other people, it is possible to generate a much larger number of original solutions in a short time. When it comes to the development of tourist products, **it is important to develop as many ideas as possible that enable the key tourist activities, and they are always related to attractions that are listed in the tourist attraction database.** Different contents should be combined in such a way as to change the number, intensity and the type of consequences of the interaction between tourists and different elements of the resource base.

Not all ideas will survive the development of the production concept as a prototype. Namely, it is not a problem if a hundred ideas are developed. The problem is if only five of them are designed. Developed ideas should

User experience

Value chain

Patterns of behavior
and relationships

Brainstorming

Innovative development of sustainable tourist products

be **tested according to clearly set criteria**. Namely, **the rapid creation of a large number of ideas can be based on wrong assumptions about customers, suppliers and/or some other stakeholders in the tourism destination**. If fewer ideas are selected, it is easier to rethink and discard those based on faulty assumptions.

Finally, it is possible to **describe in more detail the desired characteristics of a tourist product for the few surviving ideas**. The production concepts created in this way must show the content they encompass. The content must relate to specific activities that meet specific needs. It is advisable to simultaneously compose a storyline text that will emphasize the positive emotions that the product evokes. **When developing tourist products for known clients or for sale through intermediaries, these production concepts can also be used in the sales process**. In any case, production concepts will serve to test products in direct communication with potential users and/or intermediaries.

With some tourist products such as tours and packages for unknown customers, **even limited testing of new products on selected target groups of potential customers is possible**. When creating excursions and packages for known clients, each realization of a new excursion or package is unique, so user experience should be generically systematized in order to improve new products. **The development of tourist products in hospitality and tourist attractions is a far more complex process in the final design phase**. The development of the final production concept is reduced to a smaller number of substantive solutions, which then represent a project task for the wider creative team in terms of design and interior decoration. Testing is possible only after digital visualization and/or model creation, and sometimes even sample rooms.



Photo: Turistička organizacija Srbije

Production concept

Storyline text

Tourist products

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