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ADAPTED INTEGRATED MODEL
OF DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract:

The improvement of competitive position is one of the fundamental preconditions for tourism destination's survival on the market. Accordingly, long-term tourism development in the destination refers, among other things, to the establishment of a continuous tourism destination competitiveness measurement process, based on the permanent monitoring of competitiveness indicators. This paper proposes the adapted integrated model of destination competitiveness, using the example of Serbia as a tourism destination. Basically, the proposed model is based on Dwyer's and Kim's model, previously tested on several tourism destinations (Australia, Korea, Slovenia, and Serbia). The paper presents a theoretical basis for the application of the proposed model. The proposal includes additional indicators to measure competitiveness and two groups of stakeholders that are to be surveyed in order to perform the assessment of competitiveness: tourism demand - tourists and foreign tour operators.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in tourism demand and tourist flows on competitors' side are driving tourism destination towards more efficient and effective models of tourism development management. Accordingly, new possibilities for achieving or sustaining the competitive position are opening. Continuous measurement of indicators, based on which the assessments and basis for the improvement of competitiveness will be created, makes the basis for defining the key areas in the process of further tourism development.

In the process of competitiveness measurement and improvement, the important role is given to tourism destination management, as the basic driver for achieving the tourism destination competitiveness (management of resources, attractions, consumers' added value, and similar). The role of tourism destination management is to use and develop existing resources, or to overcome the lack of these, with clear and efficient strategies and creation of added value for tourism demand. On the other hand, destination management should be supported in these efforts by stakeholders who become the inevitable factor in the process of measuring and improving the destination competitiveness (Gomozelj & Mihalič, 2008). Based on the adapted model herein proposed, the assessment of tourism destination competitiveness is derived from the survey among the internal stakeholders in a destination (stakeholders on the supply side in a destination and other stakeholders, institutions, tourism experts, *etc.*) and external stakeholders among which the special emphasis is given to the tourists and foreign tour operators.

According to the World Economic Forum reports, Serbia is not holding a significant competitive position on the international market. In 2015, Serbia is ranked as 95th among 141 countries listed (WEF, 2015, p. xvi), and assumes weaker ranking than in 2013 when it was at the 89th position among 140 ranked countries, and also in 2012 when it was ranked as 82nd in line with the competitive index value (WEF, 2013, p. xvi). According to the data in the 2015 report, among 37 European countries Serbia is ranked as 35th (WEF, 2015, p. 292). Subsequently, there is the issue of necessity to research the factors that contribute to the poor competitive position of Serbia as a tourism destination.

The aim of this paper is to formulate the proposal of competitiveness model in order to define essential weaknesses of the Serbian tourism and create guidelines for further improvement of its competitive position. The importance of this paper is reflected in using the advantages of integrated model of destination competitiveness on the example of Serbia, through assessment of five competitiveness factors: natural and cultural resources, created resources, supporting factors, destination management, situational conditions, and through introducing two new factors by involving two survey groups (external stakeholders) based on whose replies the independent assessment is derived (comparing to the internal stakeholders).

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW: TOURISM DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND ASSESSMENT

Tourism destination competitiveness has become a very important research field in tourism (Crouch & Ritchie, 2008). Nation's competitiveness concept, based on the nation's competitiveness diamond, was firstly introduced by Porter (Porter, 1990, pp. 74-75). Competitiveness diamond can also be applied for the tourist destination competitiveness issues. The starting point is that the tourism destination competitiveness represents "ability of the place to optimise its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global market places, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and in a sustainable way" (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013, p. 14). On the other hand, there is a great importance of the specific role of the tourist destination management, especially because the type of services, the resources available in a destination (natural, cultural, created) and relationships between all involved stakeholders inside and outside the destination, determine the way in which tourism development will be managed. The influences of trends on the competitive market make this process even more complex. Because of that, there is an emerging need for tourism destination strategic management. N. Evans et al. (2012, p. 8) stress that "the overall aim of strategic management is thus to develop a framework for thinking ahead – strategically". Considering the role of the management, it has to be supported by the public and private sector having in mind that tourism industry creates the value of tourist experience in a destination (Dwyer *et al.*, 2014), while public sector supports and creates the framework for tourism development. Thereby, the importance of public-private partnerships is also immense, especially in striving for sustainable tourism development and reaching competitive position on the market.

Destination competitiveness can be connected to its ability to deliver an experience that is more satisfying compared to other destinations (Vengesay, 2013, p. 639). The experience delivery should be real, unsullied and rooted in the destination (Cooper & Hall, 2013, p. 27). Competitiveness is derived and it depends on the tourist choices in relation to alternative tourist destinations (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). Sustainable tourism destination competitiveness requires systematic assessment of the comparative advantage uniqueness that offers long-term attractiveness in defined market segments (Hassan, 2000).

Comparative advantage is based on the abundance of factors classified in five groups: human resources, natural resources, knowledge resources, capital and infrastructure (Porter, 1990). Having in mind that tourism is a specific economic activity, it is also necessary to include historical and cultural heritage as two additional categories, and allocate tourism superstructure besides infrastructure (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 20).

Resources make the basis for achieving tourism destination competitiveness. On the other hand, the ability for achieving the destination competitiveness advantage is also reflected in using these resources in responsible and sustainable way (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Inherited resources, together with created resources (like infrastructure, tourism superstructure) represent a tool for achieving the competitiveness. Smart tourism destination resources exploitation should lead to economic results in order to increase competitiveness advantage (Popesku & Pavlović, 2013).

Comparative advantage implies resources that are available in a destination, while competitive advantage refers to the ability of a destination to use these resources effectively and in a long-term (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 23). Tourism destination competitiveness is also multi-dimensional because it implies the following dimensions of competitiveness: economic, political, socio-cultural, technological and environmental (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, p. 2).

Achieving of competitiveness is a simultaneous process with the continuous assessment of competitiveness indicators, thus the competitiveness researchers are upgraded with the issue of its assessment. As stressed by Dwyer and Kim (2003), the tourist destination competitiveness indicators can be classified in variables that can be measured objectively or subjectively. Objectively measurable indicators are those that do not contain subjective assessments and that are quantitatively measurable. Subjectively measurable indicators are qualitatively measurable and are related to the consumers' perception. Based on this approach, as also stated by Kozak (1999), indicators can be generally classified as quantitatively and qualitatively measurable.

Competitiveness measurement, or continuous measurement of tourism destination competitive position, should be approached as a continuous process that is an integrated part of tourism destination management. Measurement results create the basis for targeted improvement of tourism destination competitiveness elements.

It is necessary to understand that there are not universal and generally applicable competitiveness models that can include all indicators, in a broader sense of detailed analysis, which are generally applicable to every tourist destination. Accordingly, the characteristics of one tourist destination, or the characteristics of its product, point out to the necessity of establishing the model that is basically applicable for a specific tourist destination and its competitive set. This further implies that, generally speaking, the approach should be limited to defining models that include relevant competitiveness indicators distinctive to a defined competitive set. Kozak and Rimmington (1999, p. 296) stress that, while defining tourist destination competitive set, it is necessary to begin with the established criteria for defining of direct competitors (defining of competitors based on a common tourist destination market segment, *etc.*).

There is also a special issue of choosing the relevant competitiveness indicators. Defining of indicators implies the detailed analysis that must result in choosing the indicators by criteria of their applicability in case of a specific tourism destination. Therefore, it is very important to define what is needed to be assessed and with which destination it is necessary to compare. As Crouch (2008, p. 4) claims, while defining competitiveness measurement indicators it is: It is quite likely that some of the attributes of destination competitiveness will be much more important than others in terms of their impact. A destination seeking to improve its competitive performance would therefore be wise to focus its attention and limited resources on those attributes that are likely to have the greatest beneficial impact. Besides

defining the competitiveness measurement indicators in relation to the competitive set, it is important to emphasise Porter's stand (1980) about the selection of important components in competitiveness measurement. He claims that it is necessary to analyse the existing competitors, which is basically connected with the defined competitive set, but also the potential competitors that may come on the scene (Porter, 1980, p.49).

There are different approaches to the competitiveness measurement that resulted in proposals for indicators and different models. Primarily, the development of many competitiveness models is based on Porter's diamond, which represents the competitiveness model of the national economy and is primarily related to the economic competitiveness (Porter, 1990). The next step was made by introducing the principles of competitive success (Poon, 1993): the environment first makes tourism a lead sector, strengthens the distribution channels in the marketplace, and builds a dynamic private sector. Keyser and Vanhove (1994) suggested five key competitiveness indicator groups for competitiveness assessment of tourism policy, macro-economic, supply, transport and demand factors. Go and Govers (1990) measured the competitiveness based on seven attributes: facilities, availability, service quality, overall accessibility, image, climate and environment as an attribute and attractiveness of a destination.

Kim's model (Kim & Lee, 2005) assesses the competitiveness by dividing indicators to primary sources of competitiveness, comprised of environment, subjects and resources, and secondary sources of competitiveness – politics, planning, management (methods for running tourism policies and tourism management), investments, taxes and prices, and tertiary sources of competitiveness – tourism infrastructure, system for accommodating tourist, attractiveness of resources, labour force. The model also sets aside resultants of the sources of competitiveness – tourist demand, tourism employment, success of tourism and international tourism income.

Ritchie and Crouch (Crouch, 2006, p. 7) developed and presented their model of competitiveness in 1999, complemented over the years with several factors. It comprises of five indicator groups: supporting factors and resources, core resources and attractors, destination management, destination policy, planning and development, qualifying and amplifying determinants.

Ritchie and Crouch model predominantly served as a very good basis for creation of the integrated model of destination competitiveness (Kim & Dwyer, 2003) because a certain number of variables, defined in Ritchie and Crouch model, was included in the integrated model (Dwye, Liviac & Mellor, 2003, Armenski et al., 2011b). Testing of the validity and data accessibility of integrated model confirmed that its structure covered the most important tourism destination competitiveness factors and indicators (Dwyer et al, 2014). As basic indicator groups, or competitiveness factors, this model implies: natural and cultural resources, created resources, supporting factors, destination management, situational conditions and demand conditions. The model was primarily applied in competitiveness assessment of Korea and Australia (Kim & Dwyer, 2003). The same methodical approach was used in competitiveness assessment of Slovenia as a tourism destination (Gomozelj & Mihalič, 2008) as

well as competitiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination (Armenski et al., 2011, 2011b; Popesku & Pavlovic, 2013)

3. STUDIES ON COMPETITIVENESS OF SERBIA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

The analysis of competitiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination requires a comprehensive study with a great number (participation) of criteria and indicators (Popesku & Pavlović, 2013), and therefore, it is necessary to review previous significant studies that are completely or partially related to the issue of competitiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination.

One of the conclusions on the competitive position of Serbia as a tourism destination is given in a study that dealt with defining the appropriate measures in order to stimulate tourism development in Serbia. The study defines tourism product of Serbia as very fragmented, selected through several offers, mainly based on facilities, or hotels, concentrated primarily in Belgrade and to a lesser extent throughout the country. The study points out that the main advantage, which should be transformed into competitive advantage of Serbia as a tourism destination, is its geographic position, specifically the geographic location and distance of Serbia from the main travel and tourism generating markets, as the basis for defining the main competitors in relation to whom Serbia must position itself (Krupka & Zečević, 2003).

The research conducted within the USAID project *A Brand Strategy for Serbian tourism* (USAID, 2004), for the purpose of brand strategy development, pays special attention to the SWOT analysis of Serbian tourism. The main conclusion of the project was that the analysis of the priority markets should point out to the key competitors of Serbia as a tourism destination.

The analysis of competitive position of Serbia as a tourism destination is covered by the World Economic Forum. Tourism Competitiveness Index Reviews of the position of Serbia, based on this report, are given in Tab.1 where global and European levels are covered.

Table 1. Competitiveness of Serbia (WEF T&TCI) – global and European level

	2015	2013	2011	2009	2008
Rank (global)	95/141	89/140	82/139	88/133	78/130
Rang (Europe)	35/37	40/42	38/42	38/42	37/42
Index value	3,34	3,78	3,85	3,71	3,76

Source: Comparative analysis is made based on the data from reports: WEF T&TCI: 2015, 2013, 2011, 2009, 2008

Methodological approach used for competitiveness assessment of Australia and Korea, as well as Slovenia as a tourism destination, based on the integrated model of destination competitiveness, also found its application in competitiveness assessment of Serbia as a tourism destination.

Competitiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination is tested by analysing six defined groups from the integrated model (Armenski et al., 2011b). It is concluded in this study that Serbia is more competitive in its natural, cultural and inherited resources compared to destination management. Also, the other competitiveness determinants of the integrated model were assessed: inherited resources, created

resources, supporting factors, destination management and situational conditions (Armenski *et al.*, 2011b). In the pilot research (Popesku & Pavlović, 2013), two indicator groups were tested, defined with determinants: natural and cultural resources and management. These studies have provided the basis for further analysis and competitiveness indicators assessment of Serbia as a tourism destination by means of the the integrated model. The results of these studies indicate that Serbia is more competitive in the area of cultural and natural resources than in the area of destination management. These studies point out that the foundation in assessed competitive position of Serbia as a tourist destination is based primarily on good resources.

Besides the above-mentioned, the implementation of the most common models for competitiveness assessment of Serbia was also used for determination of competitiveness of Novi Sad as a regional convention tourism destination (Dragićević *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the authors are referring to the possibility of applying the model suggested by Ritchie and Crouch. This model surely has a wide scope of implementation, and it also explores "the relevance or importance of key competitiveness variables to destinations at different development or evolution stages" (Wilde & Cox, 2008). Besides this, this model was also tested in the analysis of tourism competitiveness in the Autonomous province of Vojvodina, as a tourism cluster of Serbia (Dragićević *et al.*, 2012).

The latest studies related to tourism competitiveness of Serbia refer to IPA analysis, the assessment of the importance of different activities within tourism development of Serbia and its competitiveness, as well as perceptions of performances of these activities by tourism industry. Studies identified activities related to tourism in Serbia that are seen by stakeholders as important for sustainable tourism industry development, in line with their assessments of destination performances related to those activities. Research results are useful since they can enable destination management and private sector to develop action plans focused on achieving and sustaining destination competitiveness (Dwyer *et al.*, 2015).

4. PROPOSED MODEL FOR COMPETITIVENESS ASSESSMENT OF SERBIA AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

Adapted model in this paper is essentially based on the integrated model of destination competitiveness. Basically, five factors of integrated model are included. Namely, the first factor, inherited resources, is basically connected to the attractiveness of a tourism destination (natural and cultural resources). Natural resources make a destination attractive to visit and build foundations upon which a successful tourism industry is established (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), while the culture and tradition are the main forces for attracting future visitors (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The second factor refers to created resources. The third indicator group are supporting factors that are the basic infrastructure in a destination (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), which Ritchie and Crouch (2003) specifically divide: accessibility, facilitating resources, hospitality, enterprise, and political will. For created, inherited resources and supporting factors, it is typical that, being the part of the resource basis, together make a destination attractive for tourists and create the basis for successful tourism development. Destination management, as the forth indicator group, according to the original model refers to the destination management organizations, destination marketing management, destination policy, planning and development, human resource development and environmental management (Dwyer & Kim, 2003); the fifth group refers to situational conditions, which could represent certain influences to competitiveness (economic, socio-cultural, political influences, technological development, incentives, partnerships, *etc.*). They filter the impact of other factors, and thus have positive or negative effects on competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Image 1 shows the scheme of adapted integrated model.

Besides the existing factors of integrated model, the analysis includes competitiveness indicators assessed by tourists through their tourist experience. In line with this, indicators contained in the demand factor, the original
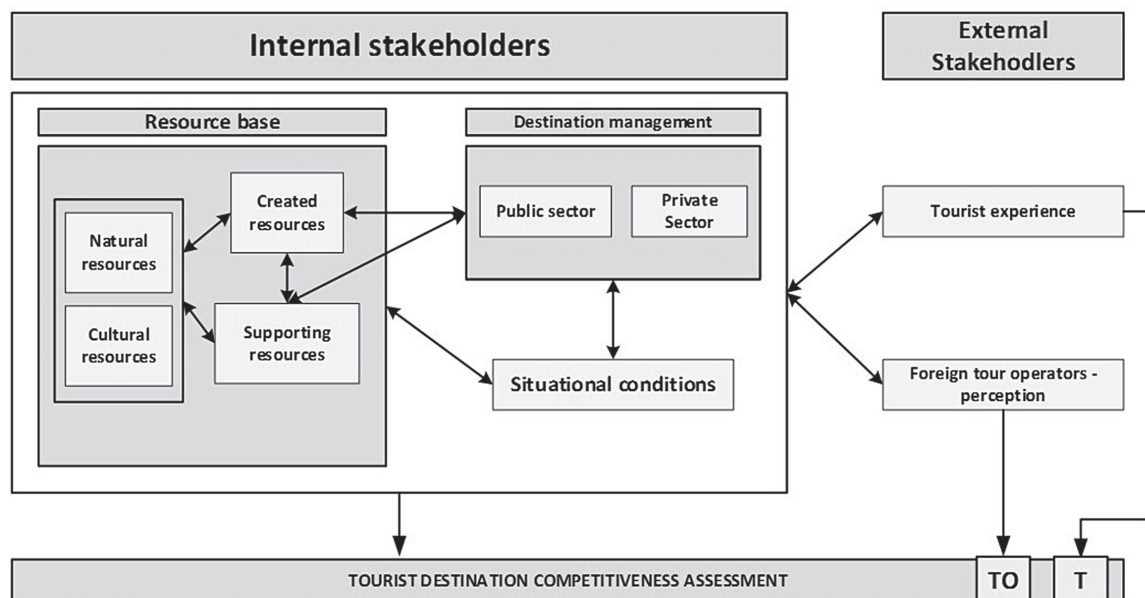

Image 1. Adapted integrated model of destination competitiveness - Serbia

part of integrated model, are included into the factor tourist experiences which contain more indicators that can be assessed from the tourist point of view. Tourists in this way assess indicators based on the "components of destination attractiveness among the services they consume (Armenski *et al.*, 2011b), and precisely based on tourist experience. Besides this, adaption is also related to the introduction of the respondents group comprised of foreign tour operators as external stakeholders. In this way, the assessment of tourism destination competitiveness is derived from the tour operators' perception.

The essence of the model herein presented is related to providing three competitiveness assessments based on different perceptions. The first assessment is obtained based on questioning of internal stakeholders in a destination. The second and the third assessment are obtained based on the questioning of external stakeholders: survey of tourist demand and establishing the connection between the experience and competitiveness: tour operators' perception as a result of the survey of foreign tour operators.

Determination to include tourist demand, or tourists as separate stakeholders, represented by carefully defined respondents group, and defining of indicators which this group assess, arises from the importance of tourist demand and its experience for the overall tourism destination competitiveness. Understanding the needs and desires of tourists (travellers), as Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) claim, is of key importance for tourism destination competitiveness. Pearce (2015) concludes that in a view of tourism destination management, tourists are an extremely important stakeholder group. Emphasising tourists as stakeholders is not only related to positioning of tourists (needs, wants *etc.*) in the focus of destination management and marketing, but also to managing impacts generated by tourists. Simplified, it can be said that the destination is competitive if the experience of tourists in a destination is higher, better and more complete compared to their experience in other destinations. Therefore, tourist satisfaction can be considered as "a main tool for increasing tourism destination competitiveness in the globalization conditions" (Pavlic *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, Hoarau and Kline (2014), point out that the value of tourist experience is not created only by service providers, but that the value is merely an integral part of experience in wider social and spatial sense.

Based on their experience during travel, tourists can point out to importance of different assessment units for establishing the perception about experienced competitiveness in relation to the destinations they visited before. This especially refers to indicators directly connected to tourism destination competitiveness. Established elements of experience during travel and stay in a destination in relation to the proposed indicators in this model are displayed in Tab. 2.

The importance is given also to the elements that refer more precisely to tourists' attitudes about the awareness and perception of a destination compared to previously visited destinations. The indicators mentioned in Table 2, which refer to the perception and awareness of destination, were initially covered by integrated model within the factor of demand (image, brand, *etc.*).

The impact of tourist demand on tourism destination competitiveness is multiple. The assessment based on the tourist demand survey is grounded on the perception, awareness and preferences of tourists, which creates the quality of experience during travel, and especially during the stay in a destination. Based on the quality of experience assessment in relation to other destinations, it is possible to establish the basis for the overview of competitive position and also establish basic activities for the improvement of destination's competitive position.

Points of view in the literature (Gartner & Bachri, 1994; Buhalis & Laws, 2001; Bastakis, Bulter & Buhalis, 2004; Čavlek, 1998, 2002; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006; Curtin & Busby, 1999; Xin & Chan, 2014; Budeanu, 2009; Spasić, 2013; Budeanu, 2009a; Čavlek, 1998; Kozak & Baloglu 2011; Dolores *et al.*, 2008; Chand & Katou, 2012; Duke & Persia, 2015; Meyer, 2003) refer to the conclusion that the role of tour operators, in the context of their contribution to tourism in a tourist destination, is reflected in: distribution – including of a destination in their own package tours; role in the field of promotional activities; direction and control of tourist demand flows; contribution to tourism development in a tourism destination; contribution to tourism destination sustainable development; impact on tourists' behaviour while choosing tourist destination; impact on creating the awareness among consumers about the destination; impact on the demand perception about the safety and security in tourism destination; impact on image creation of tourism destination; role in providing/selling of tourist experiences linked with a destination; implementation of corporate social responsibility in tourism destination development. The importance of tour operators' perception about the destination competitiveness can also be stressed. The approach based on this assertion was used in order to create the "competitive identity" of Armenia as a tourism destination (USAID, CAPS, 2010).

Indicators displayed in a part of Tab. 2, based on which it is possible to obtain competitiveness assessment of Serbia, are assessed by tour operators that include the destination in their product because they can be seen as relevant subject that has sufficient information about the destination. The starting point is the assumption that destination is competitive as much as foreign tour operators are ready to include it in their programmes. Their perception of competitiveness can be assessed by measuring previously specified indicators that can be basically assessed from the aspect of knowledge about the destination, market and competitive tourism destinations. This approach can also be used for tour operators that do not organise package tours for Serbia. In this case, it would be necessary to define precisely the indicators that these tour operators could assess. Here, the relevance and weighting of indicators is definitely assumed, but also the respondent group itself. Accordingly, from tour operators that do not organise trips to Serbia, it would be more desirable to obtain the information about the reasons for not including a destination in their product, as well as about the general perception of destination within the competitive environment.

The proposal for tourism destination competitiveness assessment, based on the perception of foreign tour operators and also tourist experience, contains competitiveness indicators that are primarily based on the integrated model indicators of Dwyer and Kim. Indicators set up in the Tab. 2 are adjusted to the respondent group itself, based on the defined criteria that determine indicators that can be assessed by tour operators and tourists.

Table 2. Indicators – external stakeholders

Demand – tourist experience	Foreign tour operators - perception
Access to information about the destination	The suitable climate for tourism
Quality of transport infrastructure to Serbia	Uniqueness of resources (natural, cultural, traditions, historical, architectural features, etc. ...)
The quality of local transport infrastructure and transport system in Serbia	The quality and variety of accommodation facilities in Serbia
Time necessary for travelling to destination in Serbia	Quality of transport infrastructure to Serbia
The suitable climate for tourism	The quality of local transport infrastructure and transport system in Serbia
Uniqueness of resources (natural, cultural, traditions, historical, architectural features, etc.)	Tourism superstructure quality (restaurants, visitors' centres, theme parks, stadiums, zoos, airports, rent-a-car locations, convention centres, etc.).
Tourism superstructure quality (restaurants, visitors' centres, theme parks, stadiums, zoos, airports, rent-a-car locations, convention centres, etc.).	The diversity of offered activities and programs in Serbia
Accessibility to tourist sites and attractions (parking lots, signs, walks, etc.).	Time necessary for travelling to destination in Serbia
The quality and variety of accommodation facilities	Accessibility to tourist sites and attractiveness (parking lots, signs, walks, etc.).
The diversity of offered activities and programs	The attractiveness of Serbia as a tourism destination
Performing daily activities (exchange availability, the use of foreign languages, the ease of ordering and making reservations, etc.).	Value for money
Service quality	Service quality
Hospitality of the local people towards tourists	Tourist safety in Serbia
Serbia's interconnection as a tourism destination with tourist companies (travel agencies, tour operators, airlines, hotel chains ...)	Serbia's image as a tourism destination
Regulations adaptation to the tourists needs (access to museums, monuments etc.)	Quality of Serbian tourism product
Value for money	Recognition of Serbian tourism product
Ratio between perceived experience in Serbia and your tourism needs and expectations	Serbian tourism brand as a guarantee of quality
Cleanness and hygiene	The quality of the tourist experience in Serbia (in relation to the previously defined competitors)
Tourist safety in Serbia	Serbia's interconnection as a tourism destination with tourist companies (travel agencies, tour operators, airlines, hotel chains ...)
Recognition of Serbian tourism product	Cleanness and hygiene
Serbia's image as a tourism destination	
Serbian tourism brand as a guarantee of quality	
The quality of the tourist experience in Serbia in relation to previously visited countries	

Source: Indicators are adjusted based on Meng (2006) and integrated model of destination competitiveness

3. SUMMARY

The main issue of tourism destination competitiveness is related to the challenge of competitiveness assessment. In this context, importance is given to the assessed indicators and factors that point out to the overall picture of tourism destination competitiveness.

In the context of the model proposed in this paper[1] and the possibility of its application in case of Serbia and its competitors, the competitiveness assessment is essentially comprised of three separate assessments. The model shows that the competitiveness assessment derived from the survey of internal stakeholder's points to the assessment from the aspect of key players in destination's tourism industry, as well as among experts and professional associations in tourism, regulatory bodies *etc*. For this purpose, previously used approach defined in the integrated model was applied. The second assessment is derived from the assessment of the tourist experience by comparing the destination with previously visited destinations Competitiveness assessment based on tourist experience can offer important information about the destination perception from the tourist's point of view and it defines, from their aspect, strengths and weaknesses of the destination's competitive position. The third assessment is related to the perception of foreign tour operators who, besides the indicator assessment itself, can also present the reasons for including or not including the destination into their product. In this way, it is possible to make conclusions that would be the basis for further improvement of competitiveness (conclusions on potential products, brand, market flows, *etc*.). Generally speaking, the model also refers to defining the differences in assessments among different respondent groups of internal and external stakeholders, which leads to further interpretations, analyses and conclusions.

It is clear that different stakeholder groups cannot assess identical indicators in total. Therefore, this model sets indicators that are identical for all groups and based on which it is possible to perform a comparative analysis, to find relations and to make conclusions on further destination's activities. On the other hand, the advantage of the model is also reflected in the assessment of other indicators that are not the same for all groups, which leaves the possibility to make conclusions about the competitiveness that could not be made only from the aspect of internal stakeholders. Accordingly, in the process of obtaining the final results, it is necessary to use complex methods of statistical analysis in order to further examine the causes of the obtained assessment.

The model also sets the basis for defining the strengths and weaknesses of competitive position. Based on the assessment, it is possible to define indicators with positive and negative effects on competitiveness. Their identification offers further possibilities for the establishment of fields where it is necessary to direct activities in further tourism development and destination competitiveness improvement.

The study of the specifics of the process of achieving the solid competitive position on the market is a complex process that makes the support to shaping the strategies of long-term and sustainable development. For this very

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1 Suggested model is part of the wider long term study of the authors, especially during the PhD studies of D. Pavlović, and results will be analysed in papers that will be published soon

reason, the basis for the further development of competitiveness model in case of Serbia as a tourism destination is suggested herein.

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