

POSSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONGRESS TOURISM ON ZLATIBOR MOUNTAIN

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Received: March 19, 2014 | Accepted: January 12, 2015

ABSTRACT: *Business tourism takes up a very significant place in tourist economy and it achieves the fastest and biggest growth when it comes to economic effects. A great number of people travels to a certain tourist destination for various business related reasons. For the last couple of years, Serbia is becoming a very interesting destination for congress tourism, which is reflected in great investments in this type of tourism. Zlatibor is one of the most significant mountain centers in Serbia, and it also represents one of our biggest centers for congress tourism. Well-favoured location, high-quality infrastructure and professional staff have made their contribution to the development of Zlatibor as an important congress center of Serbia. Zlatibor has a variety of things to offer, so each and every spared moment could be spent in getting to know the mountain, as well as its surrounding places. A great number of congresses, seminars, and symposiums is held during the course of the entire year. Among the biggest congress capacities on Zlatibor, the ones that particularly stand out are the Mona Hotel, Palisad Hotel, and the Medical centre Čigota.*

Keywords: *congress tourism, Zlatibor, congress facilities*

INTRODUCTION

Congress tourism is a specific type of tourism in which the main motive for traveling is not vacation, but participating in meetings of different nature. At the 20th Annual Congress of the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme - AIEST), congress tourism was given a definition of a "set of phenomena and events that arise from the travels and stays of people who get together for the sake of exchanging predominantly scientific and technical information, whose permanent place of residence or work is not the place of the meeting" (Štetić, 2007). Congress tourism, with all of its accompanying contents, is highly important for the development of the touristic destination, especially if it comes

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to big gatherings. A business tourism destination needs to offer a suitable venue for the meetings to be held, appropriate accommodation capacities, tourist attractions and a fine transport system within the destination (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001).

This type of tourism attracts business people of higher purchasing power, who spend far greater amounts of money than average tourists. Business tourists provide large economic benefits for the destination in which the congresses are held through the using of different services offered by the destination (Opperman and Chon, 1997), and precisely because of it, this type of tourism is listed among the most profitable types of selective tourism due to exquisite additional expenditure (Štetić, 2006). An important feature of congress tourism is that it provides the prolongation of the tourist season. Namely, congresses are organized and held during the course of the entire year, although, during certain periods of the year, there is a decreased intensity of organizing these events.

Over the past years, Serbia has been recognized as a very significant destination for congress tourism. According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2005-2015) congress tourism is one of the forms of tourist movements to be developed in Serbia. Alongside Belgrade and Novi Sad, cities of greatest importance in Serbia for business events of national and regional character, Zlatibor has been recognized as one of the potential destinations for the development of this type of tourism (Dragičević, Stankov, 2008). The aim of this paper is to represent one of the significant congress destinations in Serbia, and emphasizing the importance of this type of tourism for Zlatibor.

Zlatibor is a mountain in Western Serbia that, alongside its natural beauty, provides possibilities for organizing various types of tourism, such as sports and recreational tourism, health tourism, and, highly important lately, congress tourism. Renovating numerous hotels, expanding the convention facilities, and specializing the staff bring about an improvement of the travel deals of Zlatibor, as one of Serbia's significant destination for organizing business events. Every visitor, besides his business obligations, has an opportunity to get to know the natural beauties of this mountain and thus perfect his stay at this destination. Zlatibor is categorized as a 1st category tourist destination because of the concentration of its catering and other tourist facilities, which confirms that tourism is the most important economic activity in this area (Romelić et al., 2009).

DEVELOPMENT OF CONGRESS TOURISM IN SERBIA

A greater intensity of the development of congress tourism begins in the 21st century, when Belgrade got recognized as an important destination for organizing this type of tourism. According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2005-2015) business tourism and MICE represent products of great potential for development, relying on the strategy of low costs with investing in infrastructure, accommodation facilities and packages that include additional activities and contents, which can contribute to creating a competitive congress product, as well as to increasing the tourist traffic of domestic and foreign tourists.

In 2006, Serbia Convention Bureau was founded, as a part of National Tourism Organization of Serbia, which promotes the country as a congress tourism destination. A

year later a Convention Bureau in Belgrade was founded, and then in Subotica in 2011, however this is not sufficient for successful standing of conference offers in Serbia. No researches based on business events are done in Serbia, which is yet another flaw because the effects of these business events on the tourism of the destination can not be measured. Certain institutions in Belgrade and Novi Sad keep track of business events, but there are no statistical reports at the level of tourist destinations (Dragičević, 2012).

On Zlatibor, which represents a potential destination for the development of congress tourism, there are no statistical reports on tourists participating in congresses. Based on the data got from the Tourist Organization of Zlatibor, it can be noted that there are records of tourist traffic during the year, but there are no records of tourists in categories.

Table 1. Number of international events held in Serbia on the ICCA rank list in the period of 2006-2012

Year	Rank	Number of events
2006	73	14
2007	69	15
2008	55	20
2009	51	30
2010	43	46
2011	42	55
2012	46	52

Source: ICCA Statistics Report, Abstract for non-members

According to the ICCA (*International Congress and Convention Association*) database, Serbia ranked 46 in the year 2012, with 52 international association events in total, which was a slight to the previous year, 2011. In 2001, only one international association event was held, but since 2004 there has been an increase in the number of international events to 15 per year, though in 2005 and 2006 there was a small decrease in the number. Since 2006 until 2011 a constant growth in the number of international association events was noted, which reflects the results of larger investments in business tourism, furthermore the work of the Serbia Convention Bureau, and thus Serbia is recognized as a business tourism destination.

ANALYSIS OF TOURIST TRAFFIC

According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Zlatibor belongs to the category of tourist centers of high demand and it is listed in the line of leading tourist areas with a partaking of over 20% in the total number of overnight stays, which is registered in the mountain centers of Serbia. Tourist traffic measured by the number of arrivals of tourists in the period of 2003-2013 (Table 2) has a positive dynamic with oscillations present in some of the years. Higher oscillations are shown in

the movement of overnight stays of tourists in the observed 10-year period. The smallest number of overnight stays was noted in 2003, while in the following years, especially 2011 and 2012, a growth of tourist traffic was accomplished.

Table 2. Tourist traffic on Zlatibor in the period of 2003-2013.

Year	Number of arrivals			Number of overnight stays		
	In total	Domestic	Foreign	In total	Domestic	Foreign
2003.	70.877	66.349	4.528	330.689	314.862	15.827
2004.	83.191	77.300	5.891	343.605	326.081	17.524
2005.	80.518	73.294	7224	345.671	324.252	21.419
2006.	88.002	79.385	8.617	376.612	348.057	28.555
2007.	101.613	89.117	12.496	433.687	394.753	38.934
2008.	103.854	90.008	13.846	436.474	390.135	46.339
2009.	93.093	79.809	13.284	388.977	345.352	43.625
2010.	104.824	88.039	16.785	404.224	352.583	51.641
2011.	116.302	96.776	19.526	475.300	410.833	64.467
2012.	110.934	92.749	18.185	463.363	401.703	61.660
2013.	114.976	93.858	21.118	455.759	388.344	67.415

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Above all, domestic tourists participate with approximately 90% in the total number of overnight stays in the observed period of time. According to the data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, it can be estimated that over the last years the tourist traffic of domestic tourists shows a positive dynamic (apart from the year 2009 when the most distinct deviations were noted). The greatest number of arrivals was recorded in 2011 (96.8 thousands). According to the report of the Tourist Organization of Zlatibor, the growth of the tourist traffic during that year was strongly influenced by reviving the recreational teaching activities in registered children's resorts. This fact should thus naturally be related only to the domestic tourist demands. However, the growth of the tourist traffic in total, according to the data of the Tourist Organization of Zlatibor, is a result of commissioning of the Ski center Tornik, that caused the improvement of the winter tourist season.

On the other hand, foreign tourist traffic is significantly smaller. However, positive tendencies have been manifested in the movement of the number of overnight stays of foreign tourist at this destination. Thus in the period of 2003-2013 this number was multiplied by 4, from 15 to 67.4 thousands of overnight stays. As it can be seen in the Table 2, the year 2013. has recorded noticeable growth in the number of tourist arrivals. According to the Tourist Organization of Zlatibor, one of the reasons for the increase in tourist turnover is certainly a successful winter season, especially in the first few months, as well as the increased number of tourists during the summer season.

ACCOMMODATION CAPACITIES FOR CONGRESS TOURISM ON ZLATIBOR

When organizing business events it is of high importance for the destination to provide accommodation capacities that stand out when it comes to their quality and suitable accompanying equipment. Zlatibor possesses a number of hotels designed for organizing congresses of national and regional type. As Davidson (1992, p.97) asserts “the wider the range of accommodations on offer at a destination, the more flexible it can be in what it proposes to its business tourism customers”.

Table 3 shows the accommodation capacities on Zlatibor that are technically equipped for organizing congresses.

Table 3. Accommodation capacities on Zlatibor

Accommodation facility	Category	Total number of accommodation units	Business meeting halls	Largest capacities of the halls (number of participants)
Zlatibor Mona Hotel	4	120	5	500
Olimp Hotel	4	41	2	100
Dunav Resort	4	31	2	150
Palisad Hotel	3	230	8	650
Ratko Mitrović Resort	3	150	3	240

Source: Adapted to Tourist Organization of Zlatibor

A hotel situated at the centre of Zlatibor is the 4 star Mona Hotel, which has recently expanded its capacities. Within the hotel there is a congress center named “Koledo” with the capacity of 500 seats. The venue is equipped with the latest modern technology and suitable accompanying equipment (www.monazlatibor.com).

Olimp Hotel is situated at Zlatibor’s very entrance and is categorized as a 4 star hotel. It opened in 2000. A great congress hall with the capacity of 100 seats is supplied with all the necessary equipment. A VIP lounge is available to the guests and can be used for holding business meeting with a lesser number of participants (www.hotelolimp.com).

Palisad Hotel was open in the year 1965 and with its long tradition and quality of services offered, it has become a symbol of Zlatibor. Palisad Hotel is situated at the very centre of Zlatibor, and for the purpose of a higher quality offer, a new congress center „Palisad“ was built. The hotel possesses 8 halls for business meetings, with the maximal number of participants being 650. Congress centre „Serbia“ is also a part of the hotel and its capacity is 200 participants. The most common business meetings are in the field of law, veterinary medicine, health care, banking, plant protection and many other fields (www.palisad.rs). According to the internal data of Palisad Hotel, most of the congresses are held in March, May, June, September, and October. Most of congresses were held in October 2013, with more than 1900 participants and minimum was held in August. According to the internal information of Palisad Hotel, approximately participants stay from 1 to 5 days, rarely 6 to 10 days. The congresses are mainly national, and to a lesser extent of a regional character.

Dunav Resort has recently been renovated and its congress capacities have been expanded. According to the data from this object, most of the congresses were held in the period of May, June, September, and October, and they were mainly congresses of national character, with a notably smaller number of regional ones. Congresses organized in this resort were smaller in scope, the average number of participants per congress being 50 and the length of their stay being 3-5 days with a full board deal.

Ratko Mitrović Resort has 4 separate villas within its object area, and these are: Lovćen, Zlatibor, Srbija, and, the congress centre villa Romanija. The congress centre villa Romanija has recently been finished and it has completed the offer in the sphere of congress tourism on Zlatibor, with two halls with capacities of 250 seats, with all accompanying contents, and a surface area of 1.920 m² (www.usob.rs).

The most visited hotels for holding business meetings are Palisad and Mona Hotel. As shown in Table 3, these two hotels have the largest capacities for organizing business events. They have recently been renovated and their capacities have been expanded, so therefore they meet all of the business tourists' needs. Business events are being held over the course of the entire year, due to which the accommodation capacities are full out of the season as well.

SPECIAL VENUES FOR HOSTING BUSINESS EVENTS

Apart from the hotel offers, special venues for hosting business events are very popular lately. Table 4 shows special venues for organizing business events.

Table 4. Special venues for hosting business events

Accommodation facility	Object category	Total number of accommodation units	Business meeting halls	Largest capacities of the halls (number of participants)
Medical center "Čigota"	3*	185	3	360
Open air museum "Staro selo" Sirogojno	/	42	1	100
Sports and tourist center Zlatibor	/	37	3	1200

Source: Source: Adapted to Tourist Organization of Zlatibor

Medical centre „Čigota“ is located in the centre of Zlatibor. Its main activity is providing medical services, and it is famous for its acknowledged program for body weight regulation. The special hospital has all the appropriate conditions and venues for hosting congresses, seminars, and meetings. For organizing conventions, simposiums and seminars, a congress hall with 365 seats is at disposal, as well as two smaller halls with 60 and 50 seats. The most frequent presentations have been in the area of medicine, pharmacy, computers, technology, catering equipment, home care and many other areas (www.cigota.rs).

According to the data from the Tourist Organization of Zlatibor, these locations are touristically very attractive for holding congresses, especially the open air museum “Staro selo” (“The Old Village”) Sirogojno, one of its kind in Serbia, which offers the visitors a unique and unforgettable experience. The visitors, including the participants of the business events, can get to know the architecture of the area made up of Zlatibor’s farmsteads, yards which include objects to live in and objects for work that date from the period of the second half of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th century. These authentic objects, that are now on display in this open air museum, have been transported from villages of Zlatibor. For the purpose of hosting congresses, a hall with the capacity of 100 seats has been supplied, and an ideal place for these hostings is the summer stage under the open sky (www.sirogojno.org.rs).

Sports and tourist center Zlatibor is used on the occasion of organizing large gatherings that reach up to 1200 people. It is a location of a surface area of 14.300m² made up of a large sports hall that can be adjusted for organizing business events. Apart from the hall, there are two smaller halls with the capacities for 50, that is 30 participants (www.stczlatibor.rs).

According to Rogers (2003) these locations offer an unforgettable and unique experience for a business tourist. They include sports venues, culture venues, tourist attractions, etc. In the last years, companies are becoming more and more interested in organizing business events precisely in this sort of locations (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001).

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a very important method for emphasizing the state and the current situation of congress tourism on Zlatibor. By representing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a destination, it is possible to gain insight into available potentials that are of importance for a certain segment of tourism. Table 5 shows the SWOT analysis of congress tourism on Zlatibor, with more detailed explanations further on in the paper.

Table 5. SWOT analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touristic-geographical location of the destination • Passage of the highway M21 through the destination • Large number of events • Anthropogenic tourist attractions • Preserved environment • Local cuisine 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient number of facilities or hosting larger congresses • Insufficient accommodation capacities of higher categories • Insufficient support of the government for the congress industry • Lack of promotion related to congress tourism • Lack of training for employees in the sector of congress tourism • Lack of a congress bureau
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Zlatibor as a destination of congress tourism • Investing in existing hotels for better support for conference events • Availability of young and educated work force • Decreasing the problem of seasonality 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number of new destinations for congress tourism in Serbia and the whole region • Economic instability in the country and the region • Insufficient number of researches on congress tourism

As described in Table 5, Zlatibor has the following **strengths** when it comes to congress tourist industry:

- Zlatibor has a very favourable touristic-geographical location, as well as a good traffic connection with the main administrative centers in Serbia
- Highway M21 goes through Zlatibor, and the railroad Belgrade-Bar, which partly goes through its massif as well
- Numerous events are hosted on the mountain during the course of the entire year, so the participants are thus provided with interesting contents for their spare time (The Trumpets’ festival, Serbian fair of smoked meat products „Pršutijada“ in Mačkat, Moto Meeting – Zlatibor, Šljivovica homemade brandy fair etc.)
- Another positive feature of Zlatibor are its anthropogenic tourist values, the most outstanding of which is „Staro selo“ Sirogojno, an open air museum that shows the architecture, organization, work and life in the mountainous areas of Zlatibor, monumental values of the Memorial fountains in Čajetina, Oko and Popova Voda, as well as Uvac Monastery in Stublo billage, cottage churches in Dobroselica and Jablanica
- The mountain is characterized by relatively preserved environment
- There is a great number of restaurants that offer international cuisine, alongside with domestic, traditional cuisine

Weaknesses of congress tourism on Zlatibor are the following:

- One of the flaws is the insufficient number of objects for hosting larger congresses, as well as the lack of first class hotels which are actually the priority when it comes to organizing congresses and providing accommodation for participants of this type of tourism

- There is a need for dominance and getting the support of state authorities when it comes to incitement of development and promoting Zlatibor as a congress destination
- Zlatibor needs to be promoted as a congress destination in Serbia, and in its surrounding as well
- Training of staff is of vital importance for congress tourism in various areas of study
- There is an insufficient number of congress bureaux (only two, in Belgrade and Subotica)

Opportunities of congress tourism on Zlatibor include the following:

- It is necessary to provide promotion of Zlatibor as a congress destination
- Financial investing in reconstruction of the existing hotels and building new ones is a primary step towards the goal of promoting congress tourism
- Zlatibor possesses enough suitable locations that are adjustable for new hotel investments
- Zlatibor has great chances to increase its market share, with enough young and educated working people
- Prolongation of stays of business guests (pre and post tours)

Threats to the destination in the industry of congress tourism are:

- Serbia must take timely steps in order to achieve balance with the emergence of new competitors
- Difficulties in the development of congress tourism are caused by the economic situation in the country and the region
- Insufficient research on the possibilities for development and promoting congress tourism on Zlatibor create limitations for further development of this type of tourism

CONCLUSION

Zlatibor is a very significant destination for the development of congress tourism. This mountain is rich with dynamic relief, pleasant climate, natural and anthropogenic tourist values, which makes it a very attractive destination for many tourists. Good traffic connections and a wide range of accommodation and catering capacities provide a foundation for developing tourism on a high level.

Zlatibor hosts mainly business gatherings of a national character, and to a lesser extent of a regional one. A great deficiency of tourist offer is the lack of first class hotels, the existence of which is a priority when it comes to development of congress tourism. Tornik Hotel, which is under construction, is going to be the only first class hotel and it will complete the offer of Zlatibor in the sphere of business tourism. The Tourist Organization of Zlatibor is not keeping statistical track of the tourists that attend business meetings, so opening of a congress bureau on this destination would be of great signif-

icance. It is highly important to take care of the building of hotels and their location in the future, because Zlatibor is a mountainous sight and its environment must not be threatened.

According to the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2005-2015) the greatest accent should be put on the urban and business tourism and MICE which can be valorized in a short period of time. The key investment projects are the expansion and investing into destinations such as Zlatibor, then Kopaonik and Divčibare, as well as the expansion of infrastructure and capacities for events. Thus we can notice that Zlatibor is already recognized as a congress tourism destination which should be invested in, in order for this sector to reach a certain level. It is highly important to promote Zlatibor as a congress destination not only on a national, but on a regional level as well, in order to increase the number of regional congresses. What is especially important with promoting this type of tourism is the aspect of market communication, so related to that, more attention should be given to providing promotinal packages, catalogues of MICE offers, then promotinal campaigns in media and study visits of journalists, etc.

Zlatibor is listed among the line of significant destinations for congress tourism, so in the future, this mountain could be the leader in the sphere of business tourism in Serbia.

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