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**CONGRESS TOURISM MARKET -  
CASE STUDY: NIŠ**

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***Abstract:** Today, convention tourism is one of the most important sectors of the tourism industry. Because of the organization of conferences outside the main tourist season and high tourist spending, the biggest part of the income from tourism in the world belong to this segment of tourism. In a world more and more attention is being paid to market research congress tourism. The aim of this paper is to analyze the basic characteristics of the market of congress tourism in the world, and in Niš, which as the largest city in the region of Southeast Serbia, aims to create the necessary infrastructure facilities for conferences and represents an attractive tourist destination. The data collected in the study are the basis for future analysis of the market of congress tourism in Niš.*

***Keywords:** Congress tourism, tourism market, tourism revenue, Niš*

**1. Introduction**

According to the World Tourism Organization, about 30% of international tourist movement belongs to the so-called non-tourist developments including the congress. From year not in a year, the number of congresses, symposiums, conferences, meetings grows in all countries. The progressive increase in the number of meetings has surprised and very bold futurologer. Today, congress tourism as one of the most important sectors tourist industry. Because of the organization of conferences outside the main tourist season and high tourist consumption, the bulk of tourist revenue that the world belongs to this segment of the tourist offer. According to forecasts Seeing the World tourism Council (World Travel and Tourism Council), in the period of 2003 to 2015 total spending on business trips will grow by 73.4%, and above-average growth of 170.6% is expected in Eastern Europe,

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especially in Poland and Hungary - by as much as 200% (Tourism Strategy Republic of Serbia, 2005).

At the Twentieth Congress of the International Organization of scientific experts in tourism (Association Internationale d'Experts Scientifiques du Tourisme-AIEST), conference tourism is defined as "a set of phenomena and relationships arising from travel and accommodation for people who come together to exchange, predominantly scientific and technical information, and where the meeting place is not permanent residence or labor" (Štetić, 2007).

## **2. General Features Markets Congress Tourism**

Holiday, like any other market, is a set of supply and demand that are focused on the exchange of material goods and services by providers leadership money. Four basic elements of the tourism market are: tourist offer, tourist demand, services and price. Compared to other markets, tourist market has its own specificities which mainly arise from the complex relationship between demand and supply.

One of the main characteristics of tourist demand is her heterogeneity, confirming that the necessity of segmentation tourism market, and its division into segments of consumers have different needs and characteristics, all with the aim to reach successful business and meeting the needs of consumers, that is tourists. Market segmentation congress tourism can be made according to different criteria: the type of meetings (congress, conference, fair, stimulating journey, etc.), size meetings, the purpose of the meetings (education, information, motivation), geographical criteria (international, national, local meetings), but in the literature, the most represented division demand to corporations and associations, because these segments represent demand the two most significant and largest buyer on the market of congress.

In fact, market demand for congress tourism has two dimensions: the customer and the consumer. The buyer is actually the company, organization, employer or sponsor, which for its staff, officials or representatives (consumers), bear the costs of travel and participation in meetings. Market business travel is therefore less resilient when it comes to the cost of services, relative to classic holiday market (Swarbrooke, Horner, 2001). A person who travel for participation in a meeting usually bears the cost of travel, and changes in prices of services (transportation, accommodation, etc.) will not affect the realization of the trip. The most important customers in the market of congress tourism corporations and associations (associations). They represent specific market segments, with specific characteristics and needs (Davidson, Rogers, 2006).

Corporations make up the largest part of the market, with 65% of the total number of organized meetings and even 35% of the total realized income. Conferences organized by corporations can take various forms: meetings of the administrative board shareholders, educational seminars for employees, presentation (for example, new products), meetings with partners, clients, incentive travel, international meetings (Lawson, 2000). These meetings usually have a smaller number of participants, usually up to 100, generally short (40% of meetings lasting one day), period for the preparation and organization of the meeting is usually up to year (in the US average period of planning a corporate meeting is at 6.7 months in 2000 year), about 60% of meetings are held in hotels with three or more

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star, and the rest in the convention center, university or their own facilities (Weber, Chon, 2002).

The largest rallies around the world each year organize various associations, which exist in order to present and promote the interests of their members. This market segment consists of congress tourism trade associations, associations of various professions, humanitarian organizations, charities, religious organization, political parties. These are usually non-profit organizations of local, regional, national or international character, organized various rallies, from which are certainly the most important annual conference.

Unlike corporations, where conferencing is the cost, for the associations it is a source of income, and one of the ways of financing, because participants bear the costs of participation in the conference. The largest income is derived from annual conferences that can attract several thousands of participants (Weber, Chon, 2002; Davidson, Rogers, 2006). Conferences that organized by the association, unlike corporate, usually last longer, and and planning and organizing activities requires a longer period of time (several years in advance). Conference association, due to the large number of participants, usually organized in convention centers, but also in hotels (especially in the US, where the hotel capacities allow it).

In addition to corporations and associations, a significant segment of congress tourism market, representing both the public sector and government or government institutions and agencies, local government, educational and health institutions. This sector at the international level organizes high-profile conferences, which include the presence of high-ranking state officials and therefore attract the attention of the world media (eg conference of the European Union or the United Nations) (Rogers, 2003; Davidson, Rogers, 2006).

How congressists Conferences and other meetings affecting foring of specific needs, standard, expectations and market trends, whether it's about supply or demand, it is necessary to answer the questions who are actually thinner congress participants. According to a survey conducted in March 2003 year among business travelers (Frequent Travellers Bussines Survey), congress participants are highly educated, qualified, reputable people, aged between 25 and 55 years, predominantly male, although some research shows that a growing number of participants were female. About 63% of business travelers making more than \$ 100,000 a year. Outside place of residence, achieved an average of 73 nights with 41% reservation done through the Internet. During the travel business 50% of the clients staying in hotels and more high class and 61% would rather opt for a famous hotel chain, while only two percent of the participants wants to stay in independent and / or Family Hotel (Štetić, 2007; Tourism Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, 2005). Swarbrooke and Horner (2001) indicate that the market will be more and more business travelers from countries of Eastern Europe and from South Korea and Taiwan, then indicate the growth segment incentive, travel to distant destinations, and point out that the business people to travel more.

Legality time distribution and seasonal concentration expressed in tourist traffic apply to the conference market. The concentration of international congress tourism is expressed in low season (May, June) and postseason (September, October), this is very important because more regular use of accommodation and other tourist service provider (Štetić, 2007).

Congress tourism is a combination of travel, accommodation and most important of all, organizational services intended for business tourists who are known as demanding market segment. Congressional activity is specific and demands, as well as overall tourism, a lot of living labor and personal responsibility. However, congress an activity that is much broader than the classical tourism encompasses a much broader area. Although meetings or conferences last only a few days, preparations last (especially for major international meetings) and several years. Every encounter is unique, special and unique. Participants of the meeting and their guests at the congress place spend 5-6 times more than average tourists. The causes for such increased purchasing power in the structure of these guests. Congress activity is the exclusive type of tourism so the requirements higher than the "classic" tourism, among other things because most of the costs covered by institutions that individual or group indicate Congress (Šušić, Mojić 2014).

Duration of meetings and average stay of participants to allow them a more accurate assessment of the economic impact of the event.? According to research of the Union international associations (the Union of International Associations - UIA)? only 9% international meetings usually last one day, 39% two to three days, most meetings that last four to five days (42%) and only 10% of the total number of international meetings lasting six days or more. International research conference Association (International Congress and Convention Association - ICCA) show that the average length of meetings ranges from 4.4 days in Europe to 5.2 days in South and Central America and 5.5 days in Africa (Lawson, 2000). This situation is can be explained by the fact that South and Central America and Africa represent an attractive and exotic tourist destinations, where gatherings are organized much rarer than in Europe, and because of the great distance of the main European generating countries and tourist attractiveness of longer meetings last.

In many statistical records of the meetings will be divided into one hundred participants, then a hundred to five hundred and five hundred to a thousand or more participants. According to research the Union of International Associations, most international gatherings on average bring together up to 500 participants, this can be explained by the fact that it is easier to organize a collection with fewer participants, and for the participants is pleasant atmosphere and it is easier to get in contact with colleagues and experts in the particular field to smaller gatherings. Most of the organized conferences in the field of medicine, information technology, traffic, telecommunications and finance (Lawson, 2000).

The development of congress tourism requires a quality congress tourism offer, that will meet the needs of the participants and organizers meetings. Tourist offer, in a broader sense, make attractive (natural beauty, cultural heritage), receptive (accommodations) and communicative factors (transportation infrastructure), which are necessary for the development of tourism in general to a destination. Tourist destinations which have elements of attractiveness are also often desirable areas for maintenance of various meetings, because thanks to the tourist destination attractiveness greater the attractiveness of the event, participants came to the meeting accompanied by spouses, children or friends, and usually stay longer, in order to get to know the given destination. Congress destinations offer includes all types of objects (movable and immovable) and a variety of service activities that enable the smooth running of meetings.

For holding meetings used, primarily convention centers, then hotels, university facilities, but also some "exotic" spaces (museums, theater, theme parks, castles, and even

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means of transport, usually ship and train), to set more attractive, a unique and unforgettable (Lawson, 2000).

For successful execution together, the support of various agencies, that today specialize in providing a range of services to organizers of meetings: the provision of technical facilities and equipment, organization of banquets, gala dinner, reception, translation, interior fitting, floral arrangements and else. Also, the conference market works and a series of intermediary organizations and agencies, performing preparatory activities and organization of meetings for clients, usually large companies and associations (Rogers, 2003).

### **3. Niš - Congress City**

Urban settlements are the most popular destinations for congress tourism, because, the one hand, usually have quality infrastructure necessary for the organization of meetings, and on the other side of the complex anthropogenic tourist values. The greater tourist attraction of the city, congress organizers can expect a greater number of participants, who will be staying in the city longer than the congress, if they are in the right they present the tourist values and offers before or post congress tours.

Association of Conference Towns of Italy points out that the convention city who:

1. has a congress palace, or can be made available at any time complex facilities, technical installations and services that normally found in a congress palace,
2. has on its own territory, or close, hotel capacities that are sufficient to ensure the best lodging participants of various meetings,
3. has sufficient means of transportation in terms of capacity, but and quality,
4. located in the tourist area which offers excursions ,
5. gives participants the possibility of high-quality entertainment sets (Štetić, 2006).

According to this definition, Niš fulfill all the conditions to be dubbed as the convention center. As an administrative, economic, cultural, scientific and educational center of Southeast Serbia, Niš is a destination suitable for organizing different character sets. It has a rich cultural milieu and cultural values, which can contribute to a better and richer room business tourists by organizing various excursions.

Congress tourism is a very profitable form of tourism that entails the organization of conferences, conventions, congresses, meetings, symposia scientific and professional people for the consideration of some of the current problems of business activity, science, politics, various associations and others. It is a major tourist purchasing power. Unfortunately, the closure of the hotel Serbian tourists like Naiss, Ambassador, Park, Partizan and Ozren significantly narrowed the possibilities Niš to organize such forms of tourism. Meetings are organized hotels in Niš as Tami Rezidens, Alexander, Regency Club, Grand Hotel (formerly Hotel Niš). The most common medical conferences and is held in "Radon" in Niška Banja (Spa of Niš), for example: Traditional Cardiology Congress in November. As organizers of smaller meetings and conferences there are also hotels such as low color, My Place and others. Very often the organizers of scientific conferences are college University of Niš, which have much larger rooms for conference participants. However, the problem is the accommodation of guests, as hotels have small rooms and beds, so they are unable to accommodate more guests simultaneously. This reduces the

possibility of communication between the participants outside the meeting hall. The construction of a multi-functional congress center with several halls of different sizes would greatly complement the congress offer of Niš (Šušić, Mojić 2014).

Noticeable disadvantages for the development of congress tourism in the area of Niš is reflected in:

- Lack of accommodation capacities of high category, which is the basic precondition for the development of congress tourism at the international level;
- A lack of strategic direction and investments to improve the quality of accommodation for specific products, such as conference tourism;
- Inadequate technical equipment of the existing hall;
- Lack of cooperation and the level of cooperation between the hotel sector and tour operators and travel agencies;
- The low level of diversification and specialization of tourism products, activities and services;
- The lack of image and positioning for the development of congress tourism products for domestic and international demand.

For the further development of congress tourism in the area of Niš is very important to its proper positioning. First of all it is necessary to destinations Niš team up with other countries of Southeast Europe and thus create a unique image in Europe.

In Niš is currently registered 12 hotels (My Place, Panorama Lux, Tami Residence, Grand Hotel Niš, Hotel Aleksandar, Niški Cvet, Hotel Svetlost, Garni Hotel Rile Men, Garni hotel Lotos, Hotel Sole, The Regent Club Hotel, Hotel 018 In), 1 motel (Extra Lion MD), 9 hostels (Easy hostel, Aurora, Marvel, Dukat, Sweet, Garden, Plaža, Chesk in Hostel, Kosmopolit), 8 apartments (Only One, Four Rooms, Konak Duo D, Le Palace, Main Street, Good Night, 4 Rooms Apartments, Accommodation Elegance), 12 pensions (Majesty, Paja International, Brankov Konak, Etno Konak, Veneda, Todor, Imper I.M.D., Consul Accommodation, Linda, Laguna Lux Guest House, Konstantin 2008, Sunce), 5 accommodation units (Rooms 018, Metropol Palace Rooms, Zone, Vila Price) and there are 152 registered facility homemade making a total of 3,000 beds.

Previous analysis shows that Niš could be an important destination for congress tourism in the Republic of Serbia. It is necessary to build a new conference facilities, and thus promote the conventions of Niš, carried out advertising in leading international journals in the field of congress tourism, then presenting with world famous internet educational systems, and participation in specialized fairs of congress tourism (IMEX and EIBTM) which should to be the primary task of the Congress Bureau of Serbia, with the aim of attracting major international conferences in the country. In this way, they can expect to Niš become a leading congress destination in Serbia. Niš has already been introduced in the framework of the Organization of European cities (European Cities Tourism - EST) as an attractive destination, which has yet to be revealed, as with competitive prices, could have a huge advantage.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Congress tourism, the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (2005) put on the list of priorities, and Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš stand out as primary the place where we should develop this form of tourism turnover. Having in mind that on a world scale congress tourism is characterized by a large volume of demand, which is constantly growing, it's a great average consumption per day, and to get through congress Tourism to promote tourist destinations values, it is clear that this type of tourism tourism can contribute to the overall economic development of Serbia. In order for a an attractive destination for organizers and planners of international conventions, it is necessary that has good quality and modern-equipped congress center, the hotel facilities of the highest category, which will be aligned with maximum conference facilities. For international meetings is essential good connection destinations of air traffic to destinations from which the largest number of participants of the Congress, is expected to be a high quality transport system in the destination. Service quality, attractiveness of the destination, as well as its competitive in relation to the environment are factors that also affect the final the decision of the organizers to choice destination for conferences.

With a well-organized system of promotional activities, continuous training of personnel, market research, application of quality standards and the fact that Serbia and the entire region are not only an attractive place for investment and business operations of foreign companies, but also new, unexplored, tourist destination, Niš can expect successful market penetration of products congress tourism, and further increase the number of tourists, especially foreign, and their nights.

There is a real possibility that Niš become recognizable congress destination, bearing in mind the country's congress and conference facilities. Advantage and what is Serbia, in a way, a new destination. In addition, domestic scientific and professional associations are well positioned in the European and world scientific networks, as well as people who are on professional meetings and gatherings in the world.

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## TRŽIŠTE KONGRESNOG TURIZMA STUDIJA SLUČAJA: NIŠ

**Rezime:** Danas, kongresni turizam je jedan od najvažnijih sektora turističke industrije. Zbog organizacije konferencija van glavne turističke sezone i visoke turističke potrošnje, najveći deo prihoda od turizma u svetu pripadaju ovom segmentu turizma. U svetu sve više i više pažnje se posvećuje istraživanju tržišta kongresnog turizma. Cilj ovog rada je da se analiziraju osnovne karakteristike tržišta kongresnog turizma u svetu, i u Nišu, koji kao najveći grad u regionu jugoistočne Srbije, teži da stvori svu potrebnu infrastrukturu objekata za konferencije i predstavlja atraktivnu turističku destinaciju. Prikupljeni podaci u studiji su osnova za buduće analize tržišta kongresnog turizma u Nišu.

**Ključne reči:** Kongresni turizam, turističko tržište, turistički prihod, Niš...