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# Contribution Of Urban Tourism In Development Of A Competitive Tourist Product On The Example Of Novi Sad

Milena Podovac<sup>12</sup>, Danijel Vučenović<sup>3</sup>, Slobodan Čavić<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

*In the paper the authors analyze the tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad with a goal of emphasizing its importance for development for a more intensive development of urban tourism in this destination. Novi Sad is the most visited urban destination in Serbia after Belgrade. Despite possessing developed and good quality tourist offer, Novi Sad's urban tourist offer is still not developed completely. By introducing new facilities in the urban tourist offer as well as marketing activities it is possible to influence on greater recognizability of Novi Sad as an urban destination, and economic benefits. Based on the results of the analysis of tourist offer of Novi Sad, guidelines for improvement of urban tourist offer on this destination were formed.*

**Key Words:** urban tourism, city tourism, Novi Sad, tourist destination, tourist offer.

**Jel Codes:** L83, Z32

## INTRODUCTION

Urban tourism represents one of the fastest growing sector in tourism (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007; Bock, 2015; Postma et al., 2017). This specific tourism form is developed in the surroundings which are extremely heterogeneous according to the structure, quality and richness of tourist resources and facilities of a tourist destination. On the other hand, cities as tourist destinations are constantly changing and developing in attractive and multifunctional centres which can satisfy the needs of various market segments by using a unique and recognizable high quality tourist offer. Urban tourism represents an innovative tourist product which enables a creation of a unique tourist offer which is based in the existing tourist resources, all with a goal of ensuring of taking a competitive position of cities on the tourist market (Podovac et al., 2020). It can also be defined as a large number of tourist activities for which the city is the main centre (Ye et al., 2019). Particularities of urban tourism in relation to the other tourism forms are precisely the multifunctional nature of the surroundings in which it is being developed (Ashworth, & Page, 2011; Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2014; Koens, 2018) as well as multiplicity of motivation of tourists for staying in them (Page, 1995; Božić et al., 2017; Almeida et al., 2019). Continuous development of urban tourism offer enables for the cities to preserve and improve its position on the tourist market. In addition, enriching and differentiating the tourist offer of cities ensures a constant influx of tourists to cities as well as re-visits of tourists.

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Economic aspect of urban tourism development is exceptionally significant for the entire city economy (Edwards et al., 2008; Spirou, 2011; Rogerson, 2013). Urban tourism influences on the local population and enterprises that are doing business in the cities primarily through employment increase (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014). In many cities the primary function of urban tourism is the socio-economic renewal of urban centres with a goal of stimulating economic growth, investments, improvement of the infrastructure etc. (Sharpley, 2006). Consumption of tourists creates significant income in cities, which has a positive impact not only on the development of tourism but also other economic activities that participate in the process of meeting the needs of tourists.

By analyzing urban tourism as a unique phenomenon which through its multifunctionality contributes to the economic development of cities and achieving competitiveness on the tourist market, in this paper the authors are analyzing the potential of the city of Novi Sad for development of urban tourism. Novi Sad is a significant destination of urban tourism in the Republic of Serbia. Particularities of Novi Sad as a tourist destination reflect in the ability of unification of multiple tourist products in an integrated tourist product which as such connects attractions of urban area and multiculturalism of this city (Podovac, 2017). The goal of the paper is to question the possibilities of development of urban tourism from the aspect of its contribution to the creation of a recognizable and competitive tourist product of the city of Novi Sad. The analysis of potential of the city of Novi Sad for the development of urban tourism will enable defining of future directions of development of this tourism form in order for it to become long-termly profitable and competitive tourist product.

#### **PRESENTATION OF CHARACTERISTICS AND ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST OFFER OF THE CITY OF NOVI SAD**

The city of Novi Sad is the main administrative centre of Vojvodina and it represents one of the most attractive tourist destinations on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. It is situated in the eastern part of Europe, respectively in the area of Pannonian plain. The city of Novi Sad has an exceptionally adequate geographical position considering that it is situated in the eastern tourist direction which connects the northern, central and eastern Europe with the Adriatic, Black and Aegean sea (City of Novi Sad, 2011). Natural resources of the city of Novi Sad are a significant basis for development of various specific tourism forms. Besides an appropriate geographical position and the fact that it is situated in the central part of Vojvodina, the city of Novi Sad is characterized by adequate morphological, hydrographic and climate characteristics. The eco-system of this city is made of rich and diverse flora and fauna, as well as expressive afforestation (about 90%) (City of Novi Sad, 2011). On the territory of Novi Sad there are natural resources which are under the state protection (27 strictly protected and 22 protected plant species especially in the area of National Park Fruška gora, special natural reserve of Koviljsko-petrovaradinski rit and the park of nature Begečka jama. The Danube river, which is the biggest according to the size in the Republic of Serbia, represents an important hydrographic resource of the city of Novi Sad (City of Novi Sad, 2017), which can be used for development of recreational facilities for tourists.

Novi Sad possesses a developed traffic infrastructure, however not all forms of traffic are equally represented. The existence of a significant hydrographic potential enables development of water transport thanks to which there are conditions for transport of merchandise and people. Railway transport is characterized by the thick railway network from the direction of Belgrade, Subotica,



Zrenjanin and other cities (Department of Urbanism, 2009). The aggravating circumstance for development of tourism of Novi Sad is the non-existence of the airport on the city territory. The nearest airport is Nikola Tesla in Belgrade which is situated 80 kilometres from Novi Sad (City of Novi Sad, 2011). Opening of an international airport on the territory of city of Novi Sad would improve the quality of traffic infrastructure and it would contribute to better availability of destination for foreign tourists.

Rich cultural-historical heritage of the city of Novi Sad is one of the primary resources for tourism development. According to the data of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of city of Novi Sad (2020), on the territory of the city of Novi Sad there are 79 cultural monuments, of in the category of immobile cultural goods of great significance belongs 21 cultural good. The most significant objects that witness about the culture and history of the city of Novi Sad are: Matica Srpska, Serbian National Theatre, Museum of the city of Novi Sad, etc. Significant localities of cultural heritage are situated in Fruška gora and include monasteries which were built between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Krušedol, Novo Hopovo, Staro Hopovo, Grgeteg etc. stand out with their spiritual and historical value (Official website of Tourist Organization of city of Novi Sad, 2020). On the territory of Novi Sad numerous manifestations are organized, which are a part of the tourist offer: theatre festival Sterijino pozorje, Dragon's children's games, Musical festivities of Novi Sad, International jazz festival, International agricultural fair, International fair of hunting, fishing, sports, tourism and nautics Lorist and Exit music festival (Official website of National Tourism Organization of Serbia, 2020). The city of Novi Sad got a title of European Capital of Culture for the year 2021 (Official website of Tourist Organization of city of Novi Sad, 2020) through which possibilities were made for this city to improve the reached level of tourism development through promotion of culture, which will result in its greater positioning on the tourist market.

Table 1: Structure of accommodation offer of Novi Sad, 2020.

Type of accommodation	Number of facilities	Number of rooms	Number of suites	Number of beds
Garni hotel*	1	18	0	29
Garni hotel**	3	52	3	84
Garni hotel***	5	57	7	113
Garni hotel****	7	216	22	363
Hotel***	6	272	22	520
Hotel****	6	383	27	633
Hotel*****	2	242	53	447
Tourist settlement*****	1	58	0	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1.298</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>2.273</b>

Source: Ministry of trade, telecommunication and tourism of the Republic of Serbia – Tourism Sector: <https://mtt.gov.rs/sektori/sektor-za-turizam/korisne-informacije-turisticki-promet-srbija-kategorizacija/>, (accessed 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020).

The structure of accommodation offer of the city of Novi Sad is, according to the type and category of the facility, greatly diverse. In total number of accommodation facilities participated hotels with 45%. Besides them, the offer includes also garni hotels whose business concept responds to the characteristics and needs of urban tourism. There is also one categorized tourist settlement. Four-star hotels participate with the highest share in the total number of beds (27,8%) (Authors' interpretation according to the data of Ministry of Trade, Telecommunication and Tourism of the Republic of Serbia, 2020).

According to the Program of development of tourism of Novi Sad for the period 2018-2022 (Official website of the city of Novi Sad, 2020), five tourist products were identified that this destination is currently developing: touring, M.I.C.E. tourism, short city-breaks, river cruising and events. Besides the stated tourism forms, Novi Sad is a potential destination for development of Nautical, Sports-recreational, Youth and Excursion tourism as well (Zakić & Dragičević, 2007). Tourist tours, which are realized in Novi Sad imply shorter stays in a destination with panoramic sightseeing, as well as tours of the most significant tourist attractions (Fruška gora, visits to the Sremski Karlovci accompanied by the degustation of wines and visits to salaši, etc.). The profile of tourists who opt for this type of visit to Novi Sad implies most frequently older population of tourists, who use three or four-star hotel services (City of Novi Sad, 2018). Development of Business Tourism in Novi Sad started during the 1980s with building of sports-business centre of Vojvodina (more known as Spens). A congress centre of Hotel Park was built in 2006 (Dragičević et al. 2009) which created pre-conditions for Novi Sad to place itself on the business tourism market. Capacities for organization of business events on the territory of Novi Sad are also Congress Centre Master (surface of 11.000 square meters) and Fair of Novi Sad (surface of 300.000 square meters) where fairs are organized (Congress Tourism, 2020). After Belgrade, Novi Sad is the city which has the most significant potential for organization of business events. Besides the existence of suitable capacities, one of the factors which influences the organization of business events is the fact that Novi Sad is the university city, but also the economic and cultural centre of Vojvodina.

The offer of short city breaks in Novi Sad is based on a large number of tourist resources of natural and anthropogenic character. Besides that, adequate geographic position on significant European corridors contributes to the development of this form of tourism. The comparative advantage of Novi Sad as an urban destination is contained in the large concentration of tourist attractions in the city itself (Podovac, 2019). Specificity of offer of city breaks of the city of Novi Sad understands unification of a larger number of tourist products into an integrated product. The rich cultural heritage of Novi Sad provides tourists with quality activities during their stay in this destination. In addition, the city of Novi Sad organizes a large number of events of a diverse character, which enables the connection of the offer of business and urban tourism. The organization of events in Novi Sad, such as the EXIT music festival, is especially attractive to the tourist population, which, in addition to attending the event, uses other tourist facilities during their short stay (Podovac, 2017).

Hydrographic potential of the Danube River and developed traffic infrastructure enables cruises of ships along with berthing in Novi Sad. The profile of tourists includes mostly older people, and consumption on the city is relatively modest because the largest number of services is ensured on ships

(City of Novi Sad, 2018). In this sense, the potential of this form of tourism is not entirely exploited. Novi Sad disposes with the necessary pre-conditions for development of this form of tourism with the necessity of connecting with other subjects such as specialized agencies which organize cruises. Event tourism is one of the competitive tourist product of the city of Novi Sad considering that a large number of manifestations of diverse content and duration is being organized. Events are represented during the entire year and attract the audience of various interests. However, the ones that are organized in Novi Sad do not possess an identical potential of attracting visitors (City of Novi Sad, 2018). The most significant manifestation in Novi Sad is the EXIT music festival which is held since the year 2000. Other manifestations are mostly of cultural character (Dragon's children's games, Sterijino pozorje national drama and theatre festival, International literary festival of Novi Sad, Festival of musical festivity of Novi Sad, etc.) (Foundation Novi Sad 2021, 2020).

Natural wealth of Novi Sad and large number of localities which are under the State protection represent a significant potential for development of excursion tourism and ecotourism. Excursion tourism is developed on the relations towards Fruška Gora, Futoga, Kovina, Sremska Kamenica and Čenej. The offer of excursion tourism is enriched with complimentary facilities in the shape of accommodation and restaurant facilities. Carriers of the development of sports and recreational tourism are: Sports and Business Centre SPENS, swimming pool on the Strand, swimming pools of the Sports Centre Sajmište and others (Official website of the city of Novi Sad, 2020). The development of a number of specific forms of tourism enables the creation of a unique tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad, within which the analysed tourism forms are complementary to urban tourism.

Table 2: Total number of arrivals and overnights in Novi Sad in the period 2015-2019

Years	Tourist arrivals			Tourist overnights		
	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Total	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists	Total
<b>2015</b>	61.489	89.883	151.372	113.205	183.892	297.097
<b>2016</b>	67.808	106.681	174.489	118.956	241.622	360.578
<b>2017</b>	75.011	120.043	195.054	122.831	244.738	367.569
<b>2018</b>	75.837	138.484	214.321	157.629	295.073	452.702
<b>2019</b>	78.761	143.087	221.848	146.012	279.137	425.149
<b>Index 2019/2015</b>	+28.1%	+59.2%	+46.6%	+29.0%	+51.8%	+43.1%

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. (2019), "Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia (for the period 2016-2019)", <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G201913046.pdf>; Tourist turnover-December 2019 <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201020.pdf>, (accessed 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020)

Table 2 presents the statistical data about the total number of tourist arrivals and tourist overnights achieved in the city of Novi Sad in the period 2015-2019. In the observed period total tourist arrivals registered a growth of 46.6%, the highest being achieved in year 2019. As far as achieved tourist overnights are concerned, a total of 425.149 was registered in 2019 which is a decrease of 6,09% in relation to the previous year. Despite that, when comparing the total overnights achieved in 2019 in relation to the year 2015, an increase of 43.1% was registered. In total tourist turnover foreign tourists prevailed.

*Table 3: Average number of domestic and foreign tourists in Novi Sad in the period 2015-2019*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Domestic tourists</b>	<b>Foreign tourists</b>
<b>2015</b>	1,8	2,0
<b>2016</b>	1,8	2,3
<b>2017</b>	1,6	2,0
<b>2018</b>	2,1	2,1
<b>2019</b>	1,8	1,9

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. (2019), "Municipalities and regions in the Republic of Serbia (for the period 2016-2019)", <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/Pdf/G201913046.pdf> ; Tourist turnover-December 2019 <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2020/Pdf/G20201020.pdf>, (accessed 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020)

Table 3 presents the average number of overnights of domestic and foreign tourists in Novi Sad in the period 2015-2019. The indicators show that in the observed period foreign tourists stayed longer in relation to the domestic ones. Average number of overnights of foreign tourists was the highest in 2016 when it amounted 2,3 overnights, while in 2018 a practically equal number of foreign and domestic overnights was achieved.

Table 4 presents the profile of tourists who visit Novi Sad. The survey was conducted on a sample of 1,202 tourists who stayed in Novi Sad. Within the total number of respondents who participated in the research conducted for the need of formation of a Program of development of tourism of the city of Novi Sad (City of Novi Sad, 2018), 88,1% were foreign tourists, largest number of them being from Germany, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Poland. The largest number of surveyed tourists stayed in Novi Sad due to business and pleasure (39.5%) as well as due to the attending of EXIT Music Festival (32.5%) which justifies a high percentual participation of the younger population in the sample (average age 27.96 years of age). The majority of surveyed tourists independently organized their travel and stay in Novi Sad (82.2), while 34.2% of tourists were accommodated in a hotel. Of the total number of respondents. 52% stayed in Novi Sad with friends. The average stay of surveyed tourists is 4.91 nights, while their average daily consumption is slightly less than 36 euros (City of Novi Sad, 2018).

Table 4: Profile of tourists who visit the city of Novi Sad

<b>The main motive of visit</b>	%
Business	16.3
Rest/pleasure	9.9
Business and pleasure	39.5
EXIT festival	32.3
<b>Organization of the journey</b>	
In your own organization	82.2
Through a tourist agencies	17.8
<b>Form of accommodation</b>	
Hotel	34.2
Hostel	18.3
Private accommodation	17.3
With family/friends	12.4
Kamp	17.8
<b>Tourists travel with</b>	
Family	8.4
Friends	52
Partner	14.4
Business partner	19.4
Alone	18.8
<b>Average planned stay in Novi Sad</b>	4.91 nights
<b>Average planned consumption per day</b>	35.85 Euro

Source: City of Novi Sad. (2018), "Program of development of tourism of city of Novi Sad for the period 2018-2022", Novi Sad.

As part of the mentioned research, foreign tourists answered the question about their perception of the attributes of the tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad. As shown in Table 5, the surveyed tourists stated

that the city of Novi Sad has: a good nightlife (4.63), a diverse cultural program in the form of festivals and events (4.54) and a pleasant local population (4.54). On the other hand, the lowest average values were recorded for the following attributes: poor accessibility (3.74), developed infrastructure (3.84), clean environment (3.86) and available tourist information (3.94). The overall average rating of the attributes of the tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad is extremely high and amounts to 4.19 (City of Novi Sad, 2018).

*Table 5: The evaluation of attributes of tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad by foreign tourists*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Medium value</b>
	Good night life	4.63
	Various and quality festivals and cultural events	4.54
	Pleasant locals	4.54
	Good restaurants	4.47
	Good cafes and bars	4.46
	Good gastronomic offer	4.43
	High level of multiculturalism	4.37
	Quality accommodation facilities	4.34
	Excellent level of service	4.30
	Various shops	4.23
	Interesting architecture	4.19
	Poor value for money	4.14
	Possibility of adequate transport	4.12
	Various tourist attractions	4.10
	Various tourist attractions	4.10
	Interesting cultural and historical attractions	4.06
	Low level of security and safety	4.05
	Interesting museums and galleries	4.02
	Quality tourist signalization	4.01

	Available tourist information	3.94
	Clean environment	3.86
	Developed infrastructure	3.84
	Poor accessibility	3.74

Source: City of Novi Sad. (2018), "Program of development of tourism of city of Novi Sad for the period 2018-2022", Novi Sad.

## STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN TOURISM IN THE CITY OF NOVI SAD

SWOT analysis of the tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad, which is shown in Table 6, indicates the existence of real opportunities for more intensive development of urban tourism and its contribution to greater competitiveness of this destination in the tourist market. In order to develop a recognizable and competitive destination of urban tourism, it is necessary to take into account the advantages of the tourist offer of the city of Novi Sad, but also to consider the opportunities of improving the quality of this form of tourism.

Table 6: SWOT analysis of the development of urban tourism in the city of Novi Sad

Strengths	Weaknesses
Favourable geographical location	Underdevelopment of pair traffic on the territory of the city of Novi Sad
Attractive and ecologically preserved nature	Modest number of accommodation facilities
Rich cultural heritage	Insufficient harmonization of the offer with the needs and requirements of tourists
The multicultural character of the city	Continuous growth of demand for vacation in cities
Internationally recognized music festival EXIT	Tendency for more frequent and shorter trips throughout the year
Proclamation of the city of Novi Sad as the European Capital of Culture 2021	Insufficient recognition of the city of Novi Sad on the international tourist market
Development of forms of tourism that are complementary to urban tourism	Unrepresented international hotel chains on the territory of the city of Novi Sad
Organization of a large number of events of diverse content	Lack of management of key tourist
Good accessibility by road	
Appropriate capacities for organizing business events	

Diverse gastronomy	attractions
A growing segment of the creative and digital industry	Lack of content on the river
Support for tourism development	Lack of a unique brand of the city of Novi Sad
	Limited funds for tourism development
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Opening of the passenger airport	Significant interest of foreign tourists to stay in Belgrade
Organization of excursions in the natural environment	Existence of developed urban tourism destinations in the surrounding
Organization of thematic tours of the city of Novi Sad accompanied by a tourist guide	Lack of a clearly defined strategy for the development of urban tourism
Defining and implementing marketing activities in order to position Novi Sad on the international tourism market	Outflow of skilled labour
More intensive cooperation between the public and private sectors in order to develop urban tourism	Faster development of other regional city centres
Continuous growth of number of foreign tourists	
Growth in demand for the tourist offer of non-capital cities	

Source: Authors' analysis according to the city of Novi Sad. (2018), "Program of development of tourism of city of Novi Sad for the period 2018-2022", Novi Sad.

The future development of urban tourism in Novi Sad requires the conception and implementation of a set of adequate strategic guidelines in order to create a unique and recognizable tourist product, which could become the brand of this destination in the future. Based on the analysis of the potential of the city of Novi Sad, the authors believe that improving the offer of urban tourism requires:

Harmonization of the offer of urban tourism with other forms of tourism, which are developing in the city of Novi Sad (cultural, business, manifestation, excursion, etc.);

Organization of a number of events in the city centre;

Organization of thematic tours of the cultural and historical heritage of the city of Novi Sad;

More intensive cooperation between the public and private sectors in terms of creating and promoting the offer of urban tourism;



Continuous training and improvement of abilities and skills of staff in tourism;

Creation and implementation of marketing activities in order to promote the offer of urban tourism in the domestic and international tourism market;

Intensified cooperation with travel agencies and travel organizers from neighbouring countries in order to increase the number of foreign tourists;

Monitoring and implementation of best practices in the development of urban tourism of the main competitors.

## CONCLUSION

Modern trends in the tourist market indicate the growing importance of urban tourism and its contribution to the creation of a unique tourist product, which is intended to meet the needs of tourists staying in cities. Urban tourism in Novi Sad is still not fully developed and adequately promoted in order to attract the interest of tourists. Although there are potentials that can be used to improve the existing offer of urban tourism, the lack of a strategic approach to its development is one of the problems that need to be addressed in the future by key stakeholders. The analysis of the potential of the city of Novi Sad for the development of urban tourism has shown that there are real opportunities for more intensive development of this form of tourism and that it can contribute to a better competitive position of this destination on the market. The future development of urban tourism in Novi Sad is conditioned by continuous monitoring of examples of good practice and harmonization of the offer with the surrounding cities, which have a long tradition and positive results in the development of this form of tourism. In this paper, the authors, based on the analysis of the potential of the city of Novi Sad, defined guidelines that can, in their opinion, improve the quality of the offer of this form of tourism and achieve a higher level of competitiveness of Novi Sad on the tourism market.

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