



## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE KRANJSKA GORA AND ZLATIBOR TOURISM DESTINATIONS' COMPETITIVENESS IN FUNCTION OF IMPROVING THE TOURISM OFFER

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### Abstract:

The initial hypothesis of the work was the assumption that Zlatibor has potential for sustainable tourism development, but that the tourism destination Zlatibor is still not sufficiently competitive with the tourism destination Kranjska Gora. The research presents the key features of these areas, and their attractive tourism offers, through a comparative analysis. Also, this paper deals with the chances for the development of sustainable tourism, as well as the improvement of tourist services, specifically Zlatibor, bearing in mind that the Kranjska region is in a much better position, as far as the implementation of the concept of green tourism development. The research was conducted using a modified Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness (IMDC) model, seeking responses from stakeholders from both Zlatibor and Kranjska Gora (259). Bearing in mind that the responses of stakeholders from Slovenia showed consistently higher values in the assessment of destination competitiveness, the starting hypothesis proved to be correct, and in response to that, guidelines were given for improving competitiveness and overcoming certain threats observed in the research results.

### Keywords:

sustainable development of tourism, tourism offer of Zlatibor, tourism offer of Kranjska Gora, benchmark analysis, IMDC competitiveness model.

### JEL Classification:

P51, Q51, Z3

## INTRODUCTION

Zlatibor is a popular tourist destination with preserved natural landscapes, favorable climatic conditions, and developed infrastructure. Also, this mountain has one of the highest shares of accommodation facilities (Kordić & Milićević, 2020) and other tourism facilities, which additionally complete the entire offer. The tourism sector represents the main income of the municipality of Čajetina, so the investment in the development of the tourism offer of Zlatibor is constant and it strives to respect the standards of sustainable development of tourism (Čerović *et al.*, 2015). The factor of the local population's support for tourism development must not be left out. That support can vary in

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amplitude depending on many factors, but it is mostly observed from the angle of tourism's effects on the tourist destination and its resources. Stojković *et al.* (2020) underline that rising tourist numbers and development stage shifts can alter residents' views on tourism's impacts. One of the main features of this popular tourist destination is excessive tourism, a large concentration of people during the seasons and weekends, and excessive urbanization of the populated part of Zlatibor. All this has an extremely negative impact on tourist satisfaction. Dissatisfaction among tourists is spreading rapidly, and that is why it is necessary to follow their advice on how to improve the tourism offer by implementing specific, high-quality actions.

Seeking greater success and recognition, many countries are beginning to create a unique market positioning strategy (Armenski *et al.*, 2012). According to research by Konecnik Ruzzier and Petek (2012), in the beginning, the entire process of representing the country was based on the promotion of the country, while today the branding of the country is becoming more and more important. New technologies have largely changed the way of communicating with target markets and creating a tourist destination brand. Tešin *et al.*, (2022) highlight social networks as a new tool that has largely replaced traditional media in promotion and communication with consumers. Munitlak Ivanović *et al.* (2023) add that social networks have become a key source of information for travelers, affecting their decisions not only during the destination research phase but also throughout their stay and even after they return home. This shift in communication strategies is crucial for building a strong and recognizable brand. Countries that have strong and recognizable brands have a better image and reputation, greater loyalty of their consumers, attract more investments and tourists, export more domestic products, and have a better standard of living. Because of these positive effects, countries must strategically manage their brand. (Konecnik Ruzzier, Petek, 2012)

The Slovenian government has recognized the importance of building a strong brand, as well as that branding is not only about finding slogans and launching short-term advertising campaigns, but that branding requires defining the essence of the country's brand through the development of elements of Slovenian identity (Dwyer *et al.*, 2012). According to Koesnik and colleagues, Slovenian identity can serve as a basis for the further development of a unique story, which will help position Slovenia on the world map as a unique country. (Konecnik Ruzzier, Petek, 2012). The Slovenian Tourist Board has focused its business policy on the green, sustainable development of tourism, which represents an extremely good development policy for the country. The essence of the promotion and development of Slovenian tourism is the application of green business standards. What makes Slovenia competitive in the market is an attractive and competitively positioned assortment of tourist products, which are based on the concept of sustainability and the development of high-quality innovative products.

The subject of the research is a comparative analysis of two destinations, Kranjska Gora and Zlatibor, as destinations that have a lot of similarities, but also a lot of differences (Grum, Kobal Grum, 2014; Vujko *et al.*, 2016). The natural and cultural values of these destinations, their importance, and the potential for further improving the quality of the tourism offer are emphasized. Also, in the research was presented "green practice", which Slovenia strictly implements, which can serve as the best model of business policy for all destinations that want to join the sustainable development of tourism and thus contribute to the preservation of the environment (Quaranta *et al.*, 2016; Ahmadi *et al.*, 2018). According to this, sustainable tourism can be defined as responsible travel with very little negative impact on destinations, whose main resource is nature, promoting sustainable development and spreading environmental awareness in order to improve the quality of well-being of local communities (Petrick & Gramzow, 2012). According to Chen *et al.*, (2023), the popularity of sustainable tourism is growing at the global level, bearing in mind that tourists have a developed awareness of problems



related to climate change and therefore want an authentic experience of nature, through respect for the environment. According to research by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, (2012), the importance of tourism in nature is increasing, as a consequence of the trend of mass tourism, therefore it has become obvious that changes toward sustainable forms of tourism are necessary (Flemming, 2021).

Environmental sustainability is crucial to preserving natural resources for future generations. Tourism in Serbia has great potential and could soon drive the country's overall development (Gligorijević & Kostadinović, 2023). To achieve this, it is essential to implement eco-friendly practices and policies that protect the environment. Environmental sustainability creates challenges as well as new business opportunities for companies in all sectors. The tourism industry is faced with these challenges and it is necessary to adapt the business model. The reaction of a large number of companies is passive because they are still only concerned with reporting on the importance of applying environmental development standards, instead of applying and adapting them to their business policy to build a competitive advantage. It is important to note that an increasing number of companies that accept green standards are changing their way of doing business completely. Furthermore, Schiemann *et al.* (2023) claim that sustainable, and transformation-oriented startups hold significant potential to boost the competitiveness of destinations and improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors. Zlatibor, as one of the most popular tourist destinations in Serbia, has great potential to become the first green destination in the country, and the organization and business model of the tourist market of Slovenia, specifically Kranjska Gora, can greatly help in this.

The research concludes that by investing in the implementation of sustainable tourism development in Zlatibor, the level of quality of the provided service can be greatly increased and it can match the destination of the Carniola region. If the destination is managed appropriately, with constant monitoring of business success and continuous monitoring of tourist satisfaction, success is guaranteed. By applying green standards, Zlatibor can attract tourists who have a developed awareness of environmental protection, which leads to the spread of awareness of the importance of implementing sustainable business standards and socially responsible visitor behavior. Slovenia has managed to develop awareness among its visitors and in this way has greatly contributed to the preservation of the environment, and this research proves that Zlatibor can achieve very good results by applying this kind of business policy.

## METHODOLOGY

In the research, modified Dwyer and Kim's (2003) Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness (IMDC) was used, according to which numerous studies concerning destination competitiveness were later conducted (e.g. Armenski *et al.* 2012; Dragičević *et al.* 2012; Dwyer *et al.* 2004; Gomezelj and Mihalic 2008; Chee-Hua Chin *et al.* 2014; Petrović *et al.*, 2018). The original model has proven to be very useful in competitiveness research, because it directly indicates the strong and weak points of tourism development in destinations, i.e., the management of a tourist destination has a direct insight into the state of tourism and, based on this, can take the necessary steps in order to transform perceived shortcomings into strengths. The essence of the research is based on stakeholder surveys that is, to examine the stakeholders of those destinations that are considered an "example of best practice", as well as the stakeholders of the destination that represents the research base. The original Model was conducted in the form of a questionnaire that was divided into six main determinants of destination competitiveness involving: 1. Inherited Resources; 2. Created Resources; 3. Supporting Factors; 4. Destination Management; 5. Demand Conditions; and 6. Situational Conditions.



In the work, we used a modified model based on Supporting Factors, which contained 10 indicators, which we then translated into 10 statements that had to be answered on a five-point Likert scale (Not Competitive to Strongly Competitive). The authors believe that this factor is one of the key factors in the development of tourism. The respondents were stakeholders of two mountains, located in Serbia and Slovenia (Zlatibor and Kranjska Gora). In question are stakeholders from the field of tourism, among whom the managers of travel agencies, and accommodation facilities, as well as owners of private accommodation, employees of tourist organizations and info centers, ethnic houses, and restaurants, were interviewed. Therefore, all those who are directly engaged in tourism activity. A total of 259 respondents (105 from Zlatibor and 154 from Kranjska Gora).

In the analysis, a comparative analysis of competitiveness was used using the SPSS program, as well as the Pearson Chi-Square test. To compare the responses of stakeholders on the competitiveness of destinations in the tourism market, concerning the place where the stakeholders are from, the Pearson Chi-Square test was used. For statistically significant differences in answers, those with a value of  $p$  less than 0.05 are considered. With higher values, it can be stated that there is no statistical significance with the place where the stakeholders come from.

The main hypothesis (H) of the paper was the assumption that Zlatibor has potential for sustainable tourism development, but that the tourist destination Zlatibor is still not sufficiently competitive with the tourist destination Kranjska Gora.

### **Characteristics of the Zlatibor tourism offer**

Zlatibor is a popular air spa located in the southwest of Serbia, whose attendance grows rapidly from season to season. The characteristic of this mountain is its specific climate, with features of alpine, sub-alpine, continental, and Mediterranean climates, forming a "wind rose". This climate is extremely suitable for treatment and recovery from various heart and lung diseases, especially for people with thyroid disease. The average altitude of this area is 1000 m, and Zlatibor is surrounded by the peaks of Vijogora, Kobilje Glave, Murtenica, Čigota, Crni Vrh, Gradina, and the highest peak, Tornik. (Đenić, 2011) Zlatibor is a destination that has preserved natural landscapes, and developed infrastructure and can boast of a large number of accommodation capacities, as well as other accompanying facilities, which additionally complete the tourism offer. This mountain is rich in cultural and historical heritage, as well as a traditional, domestic offer of various products, from dairy to meat, but it is also recognizable by its traditional architecture. (Stanišić and Čačić, 2007)

The first name of this mountain was Rujno, which originates from the Middle Ages and refers to the plant Ruj or Rujevina. The name changed during the 18th century, when it became Zlatibor, after the authentic type of pine "golden pine", which is very rare today. Zlatibor can boast a large number of both natural and anthropogenic values, which is why it has become the most popular tourist destination in Serbia. A diverse tourism offer provides the possibility to create an attractive tourism offer for all visitors.

One of the biggest attractions is the Stopića cave, which is located near the village of Rožanstvo and the village of Trnava. This cave is one of the 20 largest caves in Serbia, with a length of 1961 m. It is important to note that the Stopića cave is included in the Natural Monuments of the 1st category. The cliff on which the cave is located is 50 meters high, while the height of the entrance is 18 meters, and the width is 30-40 meters. The cave is made up of 5 speleomorphological units, namely a light and a dark hall, a hall, and a canal with large travertine bathtubs, which is the symbol of this cave. Stopića cave is not known for its cave jewelry, due to the large opening at the entrance to the cave. What attracts a large number of visitors is the sipar cone „Pseće groblje“ ("Dog's cemetery") and the „Izvor života“ ("The source of life") waterfall (Ilić, 2014).



The only open-air museum is located in the village of Sirogojno, which is 26 km from the populated center of Zlatibor. The museum "Staro selo" ("Old Village") Sirogojno is located 9 km from the cave and is the only open-air museum. The museum is divided into two parts, the first part of which is a permanent exhibition of log cabins, whose condition has been completely preserved, and the second part consists of several cabins, which are adapted for tourist visits. "Staro selo" Sirogojno emphasizes the true tradition and culture of Zlatibor by presenting authentic log cabins, which were once someone's granary, koševi (places for maize keeping) kačare (vat keeping places), mišane (places for fruit drying) and houses. (Ilic, 2014)

The Gostilje waterfall is located 13 km from the village of Sirogojno and it is also one of the famous tourist attractions of Zlatibor. The cliff from which the river falls is 22m high and this waterfall is one of the highest in Serbia. This locality was recently renovated and adapted to tourist visits. (Ilić, 2014). Also, Drvengrad at Mokra Gora, known for the Film Festival "Kustendorf", has exceptional attendance.

An authentic segment of the tourist infrastructure at the destination is represented by the "Gold Gondola", a project that positions Zlatibor among the world leaders in the development of tourism, bearing in mind that this gondola is the longest panoramic gondola in the world. Its route is 9 km long and leads to the top of Tornik, across Ribnica Lake, where there is an intermediate gondola station. It officially began work on January 14, 2021, while the construction initiative dates to 2000. The public company "Gold Gondola" bases its business on respecting ecological standards and spreading awareness about the importance of the concept of sustainable development of tourism. All activities and projects realized by the gondola are in accordance with the preservation of the environment, which is the primary goal of the business.

Zlatibor has 12 registered hotels and 12 travel agencies. It is important to emphasize that the complementary accommodation capacities numerically exceeded the basic accommodation capacities, and such a trend continues. According to data from 2023, Zlatibor has 40,000 beds, of which 6,000 are hotel accommodation ([www.zlatibor.org.rs](http://www.zlatibor.org.rs)). The problem is a large number of unregistered objects, so it is not easy to present precise statistical data.

## Characteristics of the tourism offer of Kranjska Gora

Slovenia is located between the Alpine, Mediterranean, Pannonian, and Dinaric areas, with a long history of tourism development. Today, tourism is one of the most promising sectors in the Slovenian economy, which, according to the data of the Slovenian Tourist Board, achieved 15.6 million overnight stays and almost 6 million arrivals in 2018. Despite the good results, Slovenia faces the problems of the accelerated growth rate of tourism, which does not prevent it from fulfilling its goals, such as the dynamic development of tourism as an opportunity for the economic, social, and cultural progress of the country, concern for the protection of the environment and rational spatial planning, population education, providing support for scientific research for innovative tourism development (Nerad, 2020).

Kranjska Gora is located near the Alps, which has an extremely favorable effect on the location of this area. Kranj is a popular tourist destination in Slovenia with exceptional natural features which represent its main resource and make it a very competitive tourist destination. Also, this destination is a leader in the implementation of sustainable tourism development standards and can be a very good example of good practice. All providers of tourist services have a developed awareness of the importance of environmental protection and make great efforts to extend such awareness to their visitors. (Beguš, 2021)



Kranj is located in the northwest of Slovenia, near Austria and Italy, at the foot of the Julian Alps. Not far from Kranjska Gora is the only Slovenian national park Triglav, which is one of the main symbols of this country, which is why it is also on the coat of arms and flag of Slovenia. The central settlement is the village of Kranjska Gora, which dates back to the 14th century. The center of Kranj is also the largest populated center in the upper Sava valley (Beguš, 2021).

Kranjska Gora is one of the most popular winter centers at the world level. It hosts the Alpine Skiing World Cup on the ski slopes in Podkoren and Planica and the Nordic Skiing World Cup, as well as numerous important sporting events. (Beguš, 2021). Kranjska Gora offers a large number of natural and anthropogenic resources and numerous activities, the emphasis of which is staying in nature. A large number of tourists visit Lake Zelenci, which is located near the village of Podkoren. Lake Zelenci is a nature reserve and is home to many plants (such as carnivorous plants) but also animal species, including amphibians and nesting birds. The lake is on the northern cliff of Triglav National Park, surrounded by wooded Vitranca in the south, and Karavanka in the north. In the extreme western part of the swamp, there is an emerald green lake, known for its large number of springs, so the lake got its name Zelenci because of its characteristic color. The symbol of Kranjska Gora is another lake, Jasna.

The national symbol of Slovenia is Triglav, the highest mountain in the Slovenian Alps with 2864 m above sea level. Lovers of active vacations and untouched natural landscapes spend time on this mountain. Vršič mountain pass is one of the most important starting points for hiking tours to the peaks of Mala Mojstrovka (2332 m) and Velika Mojstrovka (2366 m), Planja (2453 m), Prisojnik (2457 m), Razor (2601 m), Šitna glava (2087 m), Slemenova spica (1911 m), Owl's head (1750 m), Suhi vrh (2109 m). If visitors are not fans of challenging and burdensome hiking tours, they can spend their time on less demanding walks in the natural area's surroundings.

Among the landmarks of Kranjska Gora is the Peričnik waterfall, protected as a natural heritage site, because in the previous period, there were many ideas to use the power of this waterfall to generate electricity. Peričnik was once a two-prong waterfall because, in the twenties of the last century, the riverbed above the waterfall was clogged. What makes this waterfall authentic is that you can walk behind it.

Kranjska Gora achieves its very good positioning in the tourist market through the application of green standards of sustainable tourism development:

- Thanks to its location, Kranjska Gora belongs to the Julian Alps, the first biosphere reserve in Slovenia
- Zelenci, one of the largest passable wetlands in Slovenia, is part of the Natura 2000 ecological network
- Dolina Planica is closed to traffic, so it can be reached by local bus or on foot
- The Slovenian Alpine Museum is the first information point under the Alpine Convention in Slovenia

In addition to tourism, other economic activities have been developed, such as agriculture, the production of milk and dairy products, forestry, the wood industry, and many others.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the survey include a total of 259 responses, of which 105 are answers from respondents from Serbia and 154 from Slovenia (Table 1). The responses in this survey were contributed by a diverse group of tourism service providers, including hotel managers, employees from all hotel departments, owners of private apartments and apartment complexes, staff from travel agencies and information centers, employees of cafes and restaurants, as well as various other stakeholders in the tourism industry.

**Table 1.** Stakeholders from Serbia or Slovenia

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Serbia	105	40,5
	Slovenia	154	59,5
	Total	259	100,0

The respondents' answers which are shown in Table 2, refer to their assessment of hospitality towards visitors. Respondents from the Zlatibor district gave extremely poor grades compared to respondents from Slovenia. Through 53 responses, stakeholders from Zlatibor stated that the residents of this area are "partially competent" and 26 responses stated that they are "not competent". Responses from Slovenia show significantly better results. Residents from Slovenia were rated as very hospitable, bearing in mind that 71 answers refer to "extremely competent" and 65 to "competent". In this answer, there is a statistically significant difference between respondents from Serbia and Slovenia, where it is noticeable that Slovenia has significantly higher scores, which refer to the very pronounced hospitality of Slovenian residents towards their visitors. This data indicates that employees in tourism have a highly developed awareness of providing quality service to tourists, especially how important pleasantness, kindness, and cordiality are when communicating with tourists.

**Table 2.** Residents' friendliness towards tourists

		Stakeholders		Total
		Serbia	Slovenia	
Friendliness of residents towards tourists	Not competitive	26	5	31
	Partially competitive	53	4	57
	No opinion	21	9	30
	Competitive	4	65	69
	Strongly competitive	0	71	71
<b>Total</b>		104	154	258

The data from Table 3 show that there are significant statistical differences in the respondents' answers. According to the answers of employees from Zlatibor, the results are significantly worse compared to the answers of employees from Slovenia.

**Table 3.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	183,269 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

The data in Table 4 show the respondents' answers related to the support of the local population in the development of the tourism industry. The majority of answers from tourism actors from Zlatibor fall under the category of "partially competent" with 63 answers, but also there are 21 answers from those who do not have a specific opinion. The results of the answers from Slovenia differ to a great extent, 110 answers represent the highest rating, and on the other hand, respondents from Zlatibor did not give a single highest rating. Based on the data from Table 4, we can conclude that the residents of Kranjska Gora support the development of tourism, which has a positive effect on the quality of the service provided. Supporting the development and progress of the tourism sector is a key step in achieving positive business results. Judging by the answers from the table, the inhabitants of Zlatibor do not have a developed awareness of the importance of supporting the development of tourism activities. The tourism sector represents the main income of the municipality of Čajetina, so investing in the development of the tourism offer is necessary to achieve visitor satisfaction, which is the key goal of business.

**Table 4.** Residents' support for the tourism industry

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
<b>Resident support for the tourism industry</b>	Not competitive	16	1	17
	Partially competitive	63	1	64
	No opinion	21	1	22
	Competitive	5	41	46
	Strongly competitive	0	110	110
<b>Total</b>	105	154	259	

Table 5 indicates significant statistical differences in the responses of respondents from Serbia and Slovenia. Namely, the respondents from Zlatibor with their poor ratings indicated the lack of awareness of the inhabitants of the Zlatibor district about the importance of tourism development. The respondents from Kranjska Gora expressed their opinion through high ratings, which leads to the conclusion that the residents of this area have a very developed awareness of the importance of the development of tourism activities.

**Table 5.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	228,564 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000





Table 6 provides an insight into the answers of respondents about the awareness of employees in tourism about the quality of the service provided. Out of a total of 105 responses from respondents from Zlatibor, 62 were rated as "partially competent" and 24 as "incompetent". Not a single response from employees was given the highest rating, which is very unfavorable compared to the responses of tourism actors in Kranjska Gora, where 110 such were recorded. Employees from Kranjska Gora also show better results in this category compared to the responses of Zlatibor stakeholders. Today's expectations of tourists are increasing and the goal of employees in the tourism sector should not be to achieve these expectations but to exceed them so that the entire destination can achieve a competitive advantage. Every employee must have a developed awareness of the importance of providing quality service because in this way he forms long-term relationships with visitors, who will their positive opinions share with relatives, which further leads to the creation of a positive picture of the destination.

**Table 6.** Awareness of tourism employees about quality of services

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
Awareness of tourism employees about the quality of services	Not competitive	24	1	25
	Partially competitive	62	1	63
	No opinion	17	5	22
	Competitive	2	37	39
	Strongly competitive	0	110	110
<b>Total</b>	105	154	259	

Based on the data in Table 7, we can conclude that there are significant statistical differences in the respondents' answers. Respondents in Zlatibor believe that employees in the tourism industry do not have a sufficiently developed awareness of the importance of providing quality tourist services, while the actors of the tourism sector in Kranjska Gora clearly understand how important it is to provide high-value services to their visitors.

**Table 7.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	227,035 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

The following table shows respondents had the opportunity to rate the quality of health care at the destination. The most of stakeholders from Zlatibor believe that the health service is "partially competent" (30 responses) or they do not have a specific opinion (30 responses). Also, 26 respondents rated the health service as "incompetent". The answers of the actors of tourism activity from Kranjska Gora are significantly better, where 146 answers of respondents refer to the highest ratings. The provision of health services in the Zlatibor district is hampered by the lack of manpower. Bearing in mind that the tourists' number and of the local population is constantly rising, it is necessary to hire a greater number of health workers, in order to improve the current situation and make it easier.

**Table 8.** Health/medical facilities to serve tourists

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
Health/medical facilities to serve tourists	Not competitive	26	2	28
	Partially competitive	30	2	32
	No opinion	30	4	34
	Competitive	19	83	102
	Strongly competitive	0	63	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>259</b>	

The data listed in Table 9 prove that there are significant statistical differences in the responses of the respondents, where the responses of the employees of Zlatibor indicated worse results, and the respondents of Kranjska Gora on significantly better.

**Table 9.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	164,737 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

Table 10 shows whether there are adequate programs that monitor visitor satisfaction. The use of such programs provides insight into business results - if the company manages to achieve or exceed the expectations of visitors, it achieves positive business results. Employees from Zlatibor did not give high ratings, choosing the lowest rating, "incompetent" (39 responses), and "partially competent" (24 responses). A total of 12 respondents expressed their opinion through the "competent" option. On the other hand, the evaluation of the employees from Kranjska Gora differs greatly. Slovenian respondents understand the importance of using such programs, which can be concluded from the answers of 148 respondents, who gave the highest marks. By continuously monitoring visitor satisfaction, it is possible to determine whether the company is operating in a proper manner or, if it is not achieving positive business results, what needs to be changed, adjusted, and improved. By "listening" to the demand, the company creates a product or service that the tourists want and thereby achieves satisfaction at them.

**Table 10.** The tourism sector has programs to ensure/monitor visitor satisfaction

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
The tourism sector has programs to ensure/monitor visitor satisfaction	Not competitive	39	1	40
	Partially competitive	24	1	25
	No opinion	30	4	34
	Competitive	12	59	71
	Strongly competitive	0	89	89
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>259</b>	



The data from Table 11 indicate significant statistical differences in the responses of the respondents. Respondents from Serbia expressed their opinion by choosing worse marks, while respondents from Slovenia chose higher grades.

**Table 11.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	194,963 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

The respondents' answers from Table 12 show the assessment of the existing infrastructure. Respondents from Zlatibor rated the infrastructure network poorly ("incompetent"-36, "partially competent"-24 responses). Out of a total of 105 responses, 13 respondents rated the current situation as "competent", and only 1 responded as "very competent". Out of a total of 154 responses from respondents in Slovenia, 151 rated the quality of the infrastructure with the highest marks. The infrastructure in Zlatibor is not in a good position, but it is important to emphasize that the populated part of the center of Zlatibor is in the process of improvement. Many construction sites threaten the existing infrastructure, and hinder the functioning of traffic, as well as the movement of people. The urbanization of the mountain represents a key problem, which must be controlled and implemented following the standards of sustainable tourism development. Excessive construction has an extremely unfavorable effect on the satisfaction of visitors who want rest, peace, and to stay in nature. Construction sites, noise, and the aesthetically damaged appearance of the inhabited part of Zlatibor create a bad image among tourists who will express their dissatisfaction by spreading criticisms to their family and friends and will not repeat their visit unless the current situation changes.

**Table 12.** Adequacy of infrastructure

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
<b>Adequacy of infrastructure</b>	Not competitive	36	1	37
	Partially competitive	24	1	25
	No opinion	31	1	32
	Competitive	13	49	62
	Strongly competitive	1	102	103
<b>Total</b>	105	154	259	

From the data in Table 13, we can conclude that the responses of the actors of the tourism industry in Zlatibor and Kranjska Gora indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the results, given that  $p=0.000$ . Respondents from Serbia gave worse grades, while respondents from Slovenia gave significantly better ones.

**Table 13.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	200,232 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

Table 14 shows the respondents' evaluations of the local transport system, where the employees of Zlatibor expressed their bad opinions about the current situation. The option "incompetent" was chosen by 44 respondents, "partially competent" by 34 respondents, and 20 respondents did not have a definite opinion. The answers of employees from Kranjska Gora are the opposite. The local transport network was rated highly, and respondents believe that the current state of development is in a very favorable position. It is important to emphasize that the construction of the Miloš Veliki highway improved the connection between Zlatibor and Belgrade, as well as the cities on that route. In addition to own transportation, it is possible to reach Zlatibor by bus, which should hire lines that will better connect Zlatibor with Eastern Serbia, while the north of Serbia is well connected with Zlatibor. The lines leading to the surrounding countries, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are very poorly connected, bearing in mind that there are no frequent lines, and the connection is only with the capitals of the mentioned countries.

**Table 14.** Local transport systems

	Stakeholders		Total
	Serbia	Slovenia	
Not competitive	44	1	45
Partially competitive	34	4	38
No opinion	20	5	25
Competitive	7	68	75
Strongly competitive	0	76	76
<b>Total</b>	105	154	259

From Table 15, we can conclude that there were significant statistical differences in the respondents' answers. The employees of Zlatibor expressed their negative opinions by choosing the worst ratings, while the respondents of Kranjska Gora chose the highest ratings.

**Table 15.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	197,174 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

The data shown in Table 16 refer to the existence of the catering development program. Respondents from Zlatibor believe that the existence of such programs has not been implemented and that it is not implemented to the extent that it is necessary. The lowest rating was given by 77 respondents ("incompetent" - by 37 respondents, "partially competent" by 33 respondents), while 25 respondents did not have a concrete opinion. A total of 10 employees chose the "competent" option. Respondents



from Slovenia believe that such programs are used, so 90 respondents chose the option "very competent" and 55 answered "competently". Actors in the tourism industry in Slovenia have a developed awareness of the importance of investing in such programs because in this way the level of service is raised to a higher level.

**Table 16.** Existence of Resident Hospitality Development Programs

		Stakeholders		Total
		Serbia	Slovenia	
<b>The existence of resident hospitality development programs</b>	Not competitive	37	1	38
	Partially competitive	33	3	36
	No opinion	25	5	30
	Competitive	10	55	65
	Strongly competitive	0	90	90
<b>Total</b>		105	154	259

The data from Table 17 indicate significant statistical differences in the responses of the respondents, bearing in mind that  $p=0.000$ . The answers of the employees of Zlatibor show worse results compared to the answers of respondents from Slovenia.

**Table 17.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	191,164 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

The data presented in Table 18 show the respondents' evaluations of the implementation and development of training programs for employees. The investment of the company in the training of its employees is very important because in this way the high quality of the delivered service is achieved. Through training and education, the employee improves his skills and knowledge, thereby increasing his competence and self-confidence in performing daily tasks and challenges. If the company invests in its employees through various training and educational programs, the employee has a developed sense of value, which affects the lower turnover of the workforce. The employee is also motivated to achieve positive results because he works in a healthy working atmosphere. Employees of Zlatibor believe that training and educational programs are not implemented (77 respondents gave the lowest marks), which means that it is necessary to invest more in such programs. A statistically significant difference was recorded in the responses of the stakeholders of Kranjska Gora, bearing in mind that the respondents gave the highest ratings. Slovenia has developed an awareness of the importance of investing in its employees, which is of great importance.

**Table 18.** Development of training programs to enhance quality of service

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
Development of training programs to enhance the quality of service	Not competitive	50	1	51
	Partially competitive	27	2	29
	No opinion	20	15	35
	Competitive	8	26	34
	Strongly competitive	0	110	110
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>259</b>	

Data from Table 19 show significant statistical differences in respondents' answers. Namely, respondents from Serbia believe that it is necessary to organize more frequent training and educational programs for employees, while respondents from Slovenia expressed their positive opinions about the current situation.

**Table 19.** Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	186,271 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

Table 20 provides an insight into the respondents' answers, which refer to the existence of clearly defined business performance standards. Respondents from Zlatibor believe that there are no precisely formed business success criteria. Of the total answers, 38 respondents chose the option "incompetent", 39 were "partially competent" and 20 respondents had not formed an opinion. On the other hand, employees from Kranjska Gora gave high marks, which means that this kind of business practice has been implemented by them, which can be concluded from the data in the table, where 134 answers gave the highest marks (48 "very competent" and 86 "competent"). By forming clearly defined business standards, positive business results are achieved much easier and faster, which is why every company must have precisely defined criteria.

**Table 20.** The tourism/hospitality sector has defined performance standards

	Stakeholders		Total	
	Serbia	Slovenia		
The tourism/hospitality sector has defined performance standards	Not competitive	38	2	40
	Partially competitive	39	3	42
	No opinion	20	15	35
	Competitive	8	86	94
	Strongly competitive	0	48	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>259</b>	



Table 21 proves that there are significant statistical differences in respondents' answers, bearing in mind that  $p$  is 0.000. The responses of respondents from Serbia show that the current situation is very bad, as far as precisely defined business standards are concerned, while respondents from Slovenia chose good grades.

Table 21. Pearson Chi-Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	173,640 <sup>a</sup>	4	,000

All this confirmed the main hypothesis (H) of the paper was the assumption that Zlatibor has potential for sustainable tourism development, but that the tourist destination Zlatibor is still not sufficiently competitive with the tourist destination Kranjska Gora.

According to Kosović & Copil (2016) and Petrović *et al.* (2018) who conducted similar research intending to compare the state of sustainable tourism in Serbia and Slovenia (Petrović *et al.*, 2018), both countries have percentage-wise similar rural territories, Serbia 90% and Slovenia 85%, however, mean profit per a household (annual in Euro), differs drastically. Slovenia makes a profit of about 10,000 euros, and Serbia about 2,500 euros. One of the main differences between Serbia and Slovenia, according to Teodorović and Popesku (2017) is the degree of utilization of potential and the transformation of potential into tourist attractions. Through the joint efforts of the private sector and the government, Slovenia has achieved the maximum development of tourism, thus transforming comparative advantages into competitive ones.

The main limitation is the sample size. To get a more complete picture, it is necessary to expand the research to other destinations, which would give a more detailed insight into the differences between the observed countries. The goal is to transform the weak points of tourism development into strong points that enable easier positioning in the international tourism market.

## CONCLUSION

The research presented the diverse tourism offers of Zlatibor and Kranjska Gora, two very similar destinations, but at the same time distinctly different. They possess rich and untouched natural resources, forest and meadow landscapes which opens them numerous opportunities and chances for the development of tourism based on active stay in nature, as well as health and sports tourism.

The tourist destination, Kranjska Gora, showed much better results in this case, through adequate, rational and responsible valorization of the destination. It organized its business strictly respecting the standards of green development of the destination. This country has seen the importance of implementing these criteria and thus exerts a great influence on spreading awareness among its visitors about the importance of environmental protection. The responses from the survey also confirm that the joint efforts of all interested parties in the tourism industry contribute to the achievement of outstanding results. Actors in the tourism sector have a developed awareness of delivering quality service to their visitors, which is one of the key strategies of a successful business. It is important to emphasize that regular training and educational programs influence the motivation of employees to exceed their performance, but also their professionalism, hospitality, helpfulness, and pleasantness in communication with tourists.



The work also presents the potential of Zlatibor, the most popular tourist destination in Serbia. This mountain has a large number of natural resources, which gives a chance for development and even better positioning of the mountain, promoting rural tourism, together with active rest in the mountain, and not of mass tourism, excessive construction, and urbanization of the mountain (SavoIU & Taicu, 2014). Therefore, the development of Zlatibor must be harmonized with the concept of sustainable development of tourism, which refers to the urbanization of the inhabited part of the mountain. If the development continues in the direction of mass tourism, the natural landscapes may be adversely affected by the development of tourism, and the nature of Zlatibor is the main resource of this tourist destination. In this case, the business model of Kranjska Gora can serve as a good example of the practice of a destination whose primary goal is to preserve the environment (Šprah *et al.*, 2014). Also, the responses given in the survey indicate that investing in employees is necessary for achieving business success. A satisfied employee is motivated and committed to fulfilling his obligations, successfully copes with all challenges in the business environment, and shows professionalism and efficiency in performing work duties. Hospitality is of essential importance in the tourism sector, because it creates a positive experience for visitors, increases the competitiveness of the destination, and helps to achieve loyalty among visitors, which is the goal of every company.

Investments in the development of accommodation capacities are large and the number of facilities grows rapidly from season to season, as well as the number of visitors to Zlatibor, which is a feature of mass tourism (Vujko, Gajić, 2014). Slovenia also faces a large number of visitors, but it does not prevent it from adhering to the standards of green tourism development, and Zlatibor can also apply such a business model. It is important to emphasize that the municipality of Čajetina has already begun to adapt its current operations to the concept of sustainable development of tourism, appealing to not only the local population but also visitors and investors joining this movement. A major difficulty is also the marked fluctuation of the labour force, and employers have not yet found a solution to this problem. Training and investing in employees can be one of the options, that can affect their retention, as well as various reward and incentive programs. Due to the lack of employees, there is a heavy workload, so employees have increased fatigue. The lack of manpower results in frequent overtime hours, which causes great dissatisfaction among employees.

From all of the above, we can conclude that Kranjska Gora is truly an example of excellent practice and that it can serve as a model to improve the development of tourism in Zlatibor. Zlatibor has the potential to achieve outstanding results if it adapts its current business policy to the already defined standards implemented by Kranjska Gora, which has proven to be very successful. Zlatibor is already on its way to becoming the first ecological municipality in Serbia, contributing to the preservation of the environment. Through the primary selection of waste, an efficient waste recycling process is enabled. It is important to point out the example of the sustainable initiative of the public company "Gold Gondola", the longest panoramic gondola in the world, using the latest technologies that reduce harmful gas emissions and energy consumption. The tourist organization of Zlatibor has started implementing the campaign "I drive on electricity", which promotes the use of electric vehicles as an environmentally friendly option for transportation in the destination. It is important to note that the municipality of Čajetina has started improving the quality of tourist services in Zlatibor, however, research has shown that the example of Kranjska Gora can serve as an example of a business model. If such a practice is implemented, Zlatibor can reach the world level of tourist attractiveness, which additionally contributes to improving the status of this destination.





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## KOMPARATIVNA ANALIZA KONKURENTNOSTI TURISTIČKIH DESTINACIJA KRANJSKE GORE I ZLATIBORA U FUNKCIJI UNAPREĐENJA TURISTIČKE PONUDE

### Rezime:

Početna hipoteza rada bila je pretpostavka da Zlatibor ima potencijal za održivi razvoj turizma, ali da turistička destinacija Zlatibor još uvek nije dovoljno konkurentna u poređenju sa turističkom destinacijom Kranjska Gora. U radu su predstavljene ključne karakteristike ovih područja i njihove atraktivne turističke ponude kroz komparativnu analizu. Takođe, rad se bavi šansama za razvoj održivog turizma i unapređenjem turističkih usluga na Zlatiboru, imajući u vidu da je region Kranjske Gore u mnogo boljoj poziciji kada je u pitanju implementacija koncepta zelenog razvoja turizma. Istraživanje je sprovedeno korišćenjem modifikovanog Integrisanog modela konkurentnosti destinacija (IMDC), putem anketiranja stejkholdera iz Zlatibora i Kranjske Gore (259). S obzirom na to da su odgovori učesnika iz Slovenije dosledno pokazivali više vrednosti u proceni konkurentnosti destinacije, početna hipoteza je potvrđena, te su u skladu sa tim date predlozi za poboljšanje konkurentnosti i prevazilaženje određenih pretnji koje su uočene u rezultatima istraživanja.

### Ključne reči:

održivi razvoj turizma,  
turistička ponuda Zlatibora,  
turistička ponuda Kranjske Gore,  
benchmark analiza,  
IMDC model konkurentnosti.

### JEL klasifikacija:

P51, Q51, Z3