

IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES BY INCREASING OCCUPANCY RATE OF SPAS' CAPACITY: A CASE STUDY OF SERBIA

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Abstract: *The research presented in this paper indicates one of the options for improving the management of environmental resources by increasing the occupancy rate of capacities in the spas of the Republic of Serbia (RS). It is motivated by the current needs of the tourism industry for ideas that can increase the level of potential utilization of spas in the Republic of Serbia. The aim of the paper is to use research to test a basic hypothesis, that attracting families with small children can increase the occupancy rate of the spas' capacity in the Republic of Serbia. The paper presents table research and field research. Table research was based on official data from the documents of the Republic of Serbia. The field research, presented in the paper, has been carried out on a sample of 122 respondents (parents with small children), that respond in the questionnaire with 20 research questions about the survey topic. The research results confirm that the creation of better conditions for the stay and pleasure of families with small children in the Serbian spas, and their encouragement and motivation, may greatly influence the increase of occupancy rate of the spas' capacity in the Republic of Serbia. This result showed to the authorities and management bodies of the tourism industry and spas in the Republic of Serbia that there is sense to take actions for a massive motivation of families with young children to use the spa throughout the year. The truthfulness of main hypothesis $H(0)$ is confirmed. Furthermore, it has also been shown that, by the creative approach, it is possible to generate and check other ideas for increasing the occupancy rate of spas' capacity.*

Keywords: *tourism; environmental resources; spas; management; increasing the occupancy rate of spas' capacity; the Republic of Serbia.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been actively pursued as an economic development strategy by many countries and regions around the world [1]. When defining spa tourism, we should start first from the needs and wishes of the spa service consumers, preferences and the type of services that they expect to get. Spa tourism offers the services of healthcare, recovery of mental and physical abilities, as well as additional activities and treatments. In addition to medical services, which are the basics of spa business, namely the very reason for their existence, spas offer a handful of other options for the tourists who take care of their health preventatively and who look for peace, tranquility and relaxation.

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The Republic of Serbia (RS) spas have great potential that is insufficiently or inadequately utilized and represents a missed opportunity of RS in relation to the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans. The topic of this paper is driven by the existence of a severe problem – low occupancy rate of spas' capacities in RS. The basic idea is to carry out research to indicate that the performance and increase of the occupancy rate of spas' capacity in RS depend on the service quality, and thus on creating and adapting programs and infrastructure to the needs of families with small children.

The main driving force of all activities must be the improvement of the efficiency and quality of services, which is achieved by: a) upgrading the knowledge and skills of all employees – who will consequently provide the required services in the most efficient way; b) the construction of facilities or their reconstruction; c) enrichment and upgrading of tourist offer, i.e. amplifying tourist facilities; d) encouraging operations in all seasons; e) adequate advertising in domestic and international markets, etc.

The first chapter of this paper presents the topic, idea, and intention of this paper - to examine and investigate the occupancy rate of spas' capacity in RS and the possibility to increase this rate by attracting families with small children, as one of the options to respond to the existing problem. The second chapter is devoted to the literature review in this field. The third chapter depicts the specific situation of the RS spa tourism, along with the occupancy rate of spas' capacity. We give an insight into the state of spas in RS in the last ten years and the opportunities for its development. The fourth chapter presents the research on the possibility of increasing the occupancy rate of spas' capacity in RS conducted in 2017. The fifth chapter presents the results of the research, tested hypotheses and discussion. The sixth chapter makes a conclusion of the paper as well as the proposals for possible directions for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of wellness tourism nowadays is one of the major forces of great economic growth in most countries across the globe. In the 1980's global ranking lists, Yugoslavia was ranked 8th according to the foreign tourist visits and overnights [2] - [4]. According to the economics studies [5], the post-communist tourism economy, for a decade or more this branch of the economy was branded with inadequate infrastructure, poor image, poor management, poor accommodation, lack of built-up growing attraction and entertainment facilities, low service standard, etc. The challenges and the opportunities of tourism destinations in South Eastern Europe have been relatively neglected by researchers. Six South Eastern European countries, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, former members of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, have emphasized a role of tourism in their development. The war in the Balkans and political instability are the reasons for the slow recovery of these countries in this field, and returning to large pre-war tourist numbers has not yet achieved. Among the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia is one of the most developed in the spa tourism, an especially modern form of wellness tourism [6]. In the period 1990 – 2005 tourism in Slovenia increased by 85% in the number of tourists and by 92% in the number of overnight stays [3]. In the Republic of Croatia is present continuous mild growth of realized tourist overnights in spas until 2009, when a decline in overnights was recorded because of the impact of the economic crisis [7]. Bosnia and Herzegovina, also indicate mild growth of realized tourist overnights. In Montenegro, according to the research in [8], the accommodation capacities in period 2008-2013 have a low trend of growth, and the number of tourist arrivals has steadily

increased. According to [9], the usage of the capacity of accommodation in spa centers in Macedonia is small at about 23%, and the accommodation capacity grows by only 2% in that period [10]. The current accommodation in most spas should be classified at the level of quality from one or two stars. In RS the situation is much worse, after having reached its time of prosperity during the 50s, 60s and 70s, spa tourism, for the last 25 years have been suffering from abandonment and degradation, especially the infrastructure, thermal installations, etc.

In neighbouring countries of Serbia (Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary) the situation regarding spa tourism is much better. In the past twelve years, Bulgaria succeeded in archiving good results in spa and wellness tourism, reached a stage of a great increase, despite the negative impact of the world financial and economic crisis [11]. As it was estimated in 2008 [12], France, Bulgaria and Romania jointly provided some 60% of the supply in the spa and wellness subsector of the tourist industry in Europe. In Romania spa tourism the decrease in the number of arrivals and overnight in the period 1989-2005 lowered the occupancy rate from 73.2% in 1989 to 49.5% in 2005 affecting to a lower extend the hotel units, for which the occupancy rate decreased from 84.9% to 64.9% [13]. At the national level, in Hungary in 2011 the rate of decline in overnights was lower at the national level than at regional, and the average length of stay was shortened [14].

Bearing in mind, that according to [15], sustainable economic and social development, constitutes one of the most significant challenges for the modern world, and the relationship of tourism with the three pillars of sustainable development, i.e., economic, environmental, and social, is very important [16], the development of sustainable spa tourism in Serbia can be the first sustainable challenge. Podawca & Pawłat-Zawrzykraj (2018) stated that many countries take advantage of their natural resources, cultural values and tourist virtues to various extents [17].

In recent decades, many researchers have been investigated different aspects of health tourism. Health tourism can be considered from two different points of view, medical and wellness [18]. The spa is subsector of health tourism, positioned in between medical and wellness, depending on the purposes and types of treatments [19]. Spa participation is currently showing incredible growth, as more consumers turn to spa facilities as venues to improve their health and well-being [20]. Consequently, demands of tourists are becoming more diverse: they look for new experience, quality vacations with the aim of relaxing and recovering their body and mind. Therefore, identifying the most important attributes to tourists generates an instrument for developing strategies for the improvement of the competitiveness of that tourist destination [21], [22].

The infrastructure of a touristic offer is one of the main barriers to the well-being of tourism products [23]. Towner (1996) proposed that the basic supply components applicable to spas are: good quality accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, recreational opportunities, health amenities and services, tourist attractions, infrastructure, and the spa waters themselves [24]. On the other side, fitness, outdoor sports activities, health and physical well-being are also important reasons for visiting the spa. Besides the improvement of wellness offer, the accommodations and additional facilities, such as guest catering, children's playgrounds, trim lines, need to be added [25].

Families and children are the essential emotional elements in human life. Most families use travelling as an opportunity to strengthen social and emotional connections with each other. Travelling families are very important to tourist operators, and are estimated to generate over a third of the overall tourist revenue [26]. The future of family tourism lies in capturing the

diverse children's and adults needs of different ages, from diverse ethnic backgrounds and with various family structures [27], [28]. That is the reason why family tourism is one of the largest and most constant markets in the tourist industry and yet tourism research has rarely taken any notice of spa families holidays [29], [30].

There is a distinct lack of the published research on spa and family tourism issues in the RS. This paper is one of the attempts to point out the possibility of improving this type of tourism in the RS, to highlight the problems and possible ways of their solving.

3. CASE STUDY: SPAS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Republic of Serbia (RS) is located on the lakes of thermal mineral water. There are over 1,000 mineral water springs with over 40 spas built in their vicinity [31]. Spas in the RS are places surrounded by natural beauty (mountains, rivers, lakes, caves) and cultural-historical heritage (churches, monasteries, museums, monuments, caves, etc.). They are suitable and adapted for tourism in all seasons. Consumers of the RS spas are mostly females, although an increasing trend of interest in males for visiting and using spa services has been recorded in recent years. Consumers are between 35 and 55 years of age, have secondary or higher education, mainly live in urban or suburban areas, and usually visit spas without children [32], [33]. The primary motive is the use of medical services, recovery and rehabilitation, recreation, sports training, reduction of weight, proper nutrition, educational programs, seminars, conferences, presentations and alike. This consumer profile likes to engage in sports activities in the open air or indoors, depending on weather conditions, but they also want to get to know and visit the cultural and historical heritage in spas vicinities [34], [35].

3.1. Occupancy rate of spas in the Republic of Serbia

The most important criteria that may affect the tourist valorization to the greatest extent are: the level of development of tourist capacities, the degree of attractiveness of tourist motives, the development of transport and hospitality infrastructure, training, professionalism and expertise of personnel, the level of facilities and equipment of tourist sites and centers, geographical position, cultural and historical heritage, and alike [36], [37].

No doubt the RS possesses a quality and different basis for further development of spa tourism. Its natural attractiveness creates a condition and indicates that it is possible to develop numerous types of tourist offers and services tailored to the needs of different user needs and desires of different age.

Accommodation facilities

Data in Table 1 shows the accommodation facilities, i.e. the number of rooms per year in spas of the RS (row N° 1). Based on this data we can see that the number of rooms facilities in spas varies from year to year, but when looking at the initial 2006, and the last 2014 year, that number was reduced by about 1,000 rooms. The largest capacity - the number of rooms, was recorded in 2008, with 16,120 rooms, and the lowest in 2014, with 11,126 rooms.

When it comes to the total number of beds (Table 1, row N° 2) in RS spas, in the period from 2006 to 2014, the number nearly doubled in 2008 compared to 2006. After that this number decreases.

The problem of low occupancy rates is directly related to the decline in the quality of accommodation facilities and supporting services of spa tourism. Most of the spa's facilities in the RS were built before 1976, and they now require extensive reconstruction, renovation, adaptation and, depending on the specific needs of resorts, construction of new facilities. Precisely, from the previously presented data on the accommodation capacities, it can be concluded that, in general, they have declined. On the one hand, such a trend, observed in the last ten years, may be due to a small number of tourists and the lack of their interest to stay at the RS spas. On the other hand, the decline in the number of rooms and beds is derived from the obsolescence of facilities for tourist accommodation and inability to adapt to new, modern trend – dictated by today's business of tourist resorts and their hospitality units.

<i>N°</i>	<i>Year</i>	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	<i>Number of rooms</i> (in [1])	12008	15948	16120	14120	14339	14443	13686	12170	11126
2	<i>Number of beds</i> (in [1])	27967	41416	42243	36919	37306	37445	35543	26536	24399
3	<i>Number of tourist overnights</i> (in [10 ³])	2183	2335	2368	2286	2210	2308	2035	2134	1852
4	<i>Domestic tourists</i> (in [10 ³])	302	359	343	334	320	341.5	277	283.3	263.1
5	<i>Foreign tourists</i> (in [10 ³])	17	25	23	24	25	33.8	31.4	40.7	47.4
6	<i>Total number of tourists</i> (in [10 ³])	319	384	366	358	345	375.3	308.4	324	310.5
7	<i>Occupancy rate</i> (in [%])	21.39	15.45	15.36	16.96	16.23	16.89	15.69	22.03	20.80

Table 1. Accommodation facilities of spas in RS and tourist in the period 2006 - 2014
Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Statistical Yearbooks, *Tourism 2006 - 2014*

Tourist traffic

Tourist traffic in the RS spas records overnight stays and tourist arrivals per year. Table 1 (row N° 3) displays the data on the number of overnight stays per year, starting from 2006 until 2014. The analysis of these data shows that the number of overnights in the reporting period decreased. By 2008, the number of overnight stays grew when the most extensive tourist traffic was recorded, with 2,368,000 overnight stays. After this year, the number of tourist overnights begins to decline, and this trend continues until 2014, except in 2011 and 2013, when the number of overnight stays grows rapidly, but the number is still lower than the maximum number of overnights recorded in 2008. When it comes to domestic tourists who visited RS spas in the observed period (Table 1, row N° 4), it can be said that the number of their arrivals grew until 2007, after which there was a continuous decline, except in 2011. The difference between the arrivals in 2007 and 2014 comes to about 90,000.

Regarding the visits of foreign tourists (Table 1, row N° 5), it is interesting that the number of their arrivals grows from year to year, except for the period 2008-2010 when this number held steady, after which it increased again, reaching the amount of 47,402 arrivals. The difference, i.e. the increase in the number of foreign tourist arrivals from 2006 to 2014 is about 30,000. Based on the data from Table 1 (row N° 6), it can be concluded that it is not possible to determine the trend in the total number of arrivals in the reporting period because this number changes from year to year so that it increases in one year while decreases in the following. However, despite this irregularity in the movement of the total number of tourist visits, it can be noted that the number of arrivals grows until 2007, after which it starts to decrease, whereby a significantly lower number of visits is recorded between 2007 and 2014, i.e. for about 74,000 arrivals.

Capacity utilization in spas of Republic of Serbia

The occupancy rate of spas' facilities, as shown in Table 1 (row N^o 7), points to the fact that the capacities of RS spas in the period 2006-2014, are underutilized (15.36 to 21.39 [%]). The difference between the used and unused capacity is huge (about 80 [%]), which indicates the necessity to undertake activities to use RS spas potentials in a better way.

Based on the analysis of the presented data, it can be concluded that the RS spas have been recording decline over a long period according to all observed criteria. This unfavorable situation in the RS spas can be improved and enhanced to some extent by the development of spa tourism. The development of spa tourism implies additional investment in the renovation or construction of new facilities, enrichment of the tourist offers, year-round operating, the corresponding marketing in domestic and foreign markets, lasting and well-designed advertising and other measures.

3.2. Possibilities for the development of spa tourism in the Republic of Serbia

The problem of the low occupancy rate of capacities can be solved in several ways. One way is to attract people with different needs. It refers to the people who would come to spas in greater numbers than before to rest, perform intellectual or artistic work, and enjoy order, peace. For spas' resorts, this means an obligation to provide such conditions on the one hand, but also a chance to fill unused capacity, on the other. Therefore, the target groups spas could address include the following: parents/families with small children; sportspersons and recreationists; intellectuals; artists; business people (for seminars and conferences); people who act preventively to their health. The construction of sports grounds at the location where they would not disturb peace and order would enable both sportspersons and other tourists to engage in sports activities. In addition to the construction of the grounds, it is necessary to construct and renovate hiking and jogging trails, bike lanes, hiking trails, organize visits to cultural and natural heritage sites and alike.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

The research presented in this paper is based on the demonstration of the opportunities that the spas in the Republic of Serbia have not adequately or sufficiently exploited and the fact that capacity utilization of spas has been low for years. We are considering one variant of spas' response to the problem of attracting families with small children.

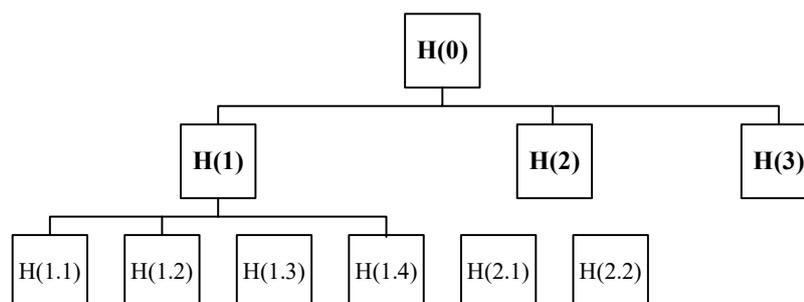


Figure 1: The structure of the hypothesis tree

The **basic** research hypothesis is:

H(0): *By attracting families with small children, it is possible to achieve a higher occupation rate in spas of Republic of Serbia.*

The **specific** hypotheses of this research were defined as follows:

H(1): *Creating conditions for the stay of small children in spas encourages the arrival of their families.*

H(2): *Providing benefits to families with small children encourages their arrival.*

H(3): *Creating conditions for the activities of small children in spas - in full and offseason, encourages the arrival of their families.*

Specific hypothesis H(1) comprises four **individual** hypotheses, namely:

H(1.1): *Creating conditions for the manifestations of cultural and entertainment activities of small children in spas encourage the arrival of their families.*

H(1.2): *Creating conditions for the education of small children in spas encourages the arrival of their families.*

H (1.3): *Creating conditions for small children recreation in spas encourages the arrival of their families.*

H (1.4): *Creating conditions for small children to visit tourist attractions encourages the arrival of their families.*

Specific hypothesis H(2) comprises two **individual** hypotheses:

H (2.1): *Providing financial incentives for staying in spas to families with small children encourages their arrival.*

H (2.2): *Giving non-financial benefits for staying in spas to families with small children encourages their arrival.*

The structure of the research hypotheses is shown in Figure 1.

The research was carried out during a 30-day anonymous survey in October 2017 on a sample of 122 respondents (parents with small children). A self-administrated questionnaire was used as a research technique. Potential users of spas services answered different sets of questions.

The questionnaire contained 26 closed, semi-closed and open-ended questions. The first six questions were related to general information about the sample (Table 2), while others (20) were directly related to the research of the possibility to increase the occupancy rate of capacity in RS spas. Table 2 shows the main attributes of the sample. From Table 2 it can be seen that the prevailing groups of the sample consist of respondents aged 30-45 (71.9 [%]), with university degree, master and doctoral level (50.9 [%]), with one or two children (M = 1.52) and with a monthly income of between 40,000 and 100,000 RSD (60.4 [%]).

N ^o	Categorical variables		Number	Percentage
1	Parent's gender	Male	36	29.5 %
		Female	86	70.5 %
2	Parent's age	< 20	0	0 %
		20-25	5	4.1 %
		20-30	16	13.2 %
		30-35	25	20.7 %
		35-40	32	26.4 %
		40-45	30	24.8 %
		>45	13	10.7 %
3	Parent's education level	Secondary school	46	37.7 %
		College	14	11.5 %
		University	36	29.5 %
		Master degree	18	14.8 %
		PhD degree	8	6.6 %
4	Number of children	1	70	57.4 %
		2	41	33.6 %
		3	11	9.0 %
5	Family earnings per month	Less than 40000 RSD	16	13.2 %
		Between 40000 - 70000 RSD	48	39.7 %
		Between 70000 - 100000 RSD	25	20.7 %
		More than 100000 RSD	32	26.4 %
	Scale variables	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	
6	Average number of children	1.52	0.654	

Table 2. The structure of the survey sample with frequencies of categorical variables

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire contained 26 closed, semi-closed and open-ended questions. Based on the results of the study on the possibilities for increasing the level of occupancy rate in the RS spas, the general attitudes of the respondents regarding the desires and intentions to visit spas in the RS indicate that among the respondents 45.9 [%] have already been customers of spa services in the RS. Also, 65.3 [%] of respondents said that the RS spas are attractive for families with small children. Some of the most common reasons for not visiting spas in RS are: *the age of people who visit them* (35.4 [%]), *the price of services* (29.2 [%]) and *inadequate program for children* (21.5 [%]).

Furthermore, we have presented the research results by which we have tested the defined research hypotheses. Specific hypothesis H(1) consists of four individual hypotheses, for which the four groups of research questions (RQ) were formulated. Based on the research questions' responses, the conclusions on the acceptance of the individual hypothesis are made. The results of responses to questions related to a specific hypothesis H(1.1) are presented in Table 3 (row N^o 1 and 2). Based on the results, it can be concluded that the most common activities that attract tourists in spas are: *music festivals for children* (18.9 [%]), *theatrical performances* (15.1 [%]), *film festivals for children* (14.9 [%]) and *dress-up parties for children* (13.4 [%]). The result has been tested by the Chi-square test. The prevailing positive attitude of respondents (86.9 [%]) to using the services of spa tourism versus negative (13.1 [%]) was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The value of the Chi-square test is $\chi^2 (1, N = 122) = 66.39$. Given that the majority of parents with small children gave an affirmative answer, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(1.1) was confirmed.

The results of responses to questions related to individual hypothesis H(1.2) are shown in Table 3 (row N° 3 and 4). Among the answers on the question of the most common activities in *language schools* (23.4%) and *educational workshops* (20.6 [%]) were distinguished. The results are tested with the Chi-square test. The prevailing positive attitude of respondents (91.8 [%]) on using the services of spa tourism for the purpose of children's education versus negative (8.2 [%]) was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The value of the Chi-square test was $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 85.28$. As the majority of parents with small children gave affirmative answers, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(1.2) was confirmed.

The results of responses to questions related to individual hypothesis H(1.3) are shown in Table 3 (Row N° 5 and 6). The most common sports and dance activities that attract the attention of parents with small children, by this research, were: *swimming, basketball, football, volleyball, water polo, ballet, horse riding, skating, karate, and athletics*. Of all the listed sports and physical activities, swimming is the most common - with a 14.8 [%] share, and together with other water sports makes up a total of 19.3 [%]. The conclusion is that the spas that have developed infrastructure have a greater chance of being selected as a tourist destination. Obtained answers were tested by the Chi-square test. The prevailing attitude is positive (86.9 [%]) on using the services of spa tourism for sport and recreation of children against negative attitude (13.1 [%]). The value of the Chi-square test $\chi^2(1, n = 122) = 66.39$ was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Given that the majority of parents with small children gave an affirmative answer, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(1.3) was confirmed.

Results of responses to questions related to individual hypothesis H(1.4) are shown in Table 3 (row N° 7 and 8). The most common tourist attractions, according to the respondents, are: *national parks* (21.3 [%]), *rivers and lakes* (15.1 [%]), *churches and monasteries* (15.1 [%]), *mountains* (12.8 [%]) and *nature reserves* (11.4 [%]). The responses were tested by the Chi-square test. The prevailing positive attitude of respondents (85.2 [%]) on using the services of spa tourism to visit tourist attractions versus negative (14.8 [%]), was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). The value of the Chi-square test was $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 60.62$. As the majority of parents of small children gave an affirmative answer, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(1.4) was confirmed. Given the fact that the individual hypotheses H(1.1), H(1.2), H(1.3), and H(1.4) were confirmed, the specific hypothesis H(1) was also confirmed. Therefore, if desired activities were available, and the conditions for a tourist stay of small children in spas were created, families with children would be encouraged to visit the RS spas. Thus a higher degree of occupation rates of these spas will be achieved. The hypothesis H(2) relating to the circumstances of giving benefits to families with small children to encourage their visits to spas is separated into two individual hypotheses pertaining on financial and non-financial benefits.

Results of responses to questions related to the individual hypothesis H(2.1) are shown in Table 4 (row N° 1 and 2). The largest number of respondents „chose” the following types of financial benefits: lower costs for accommodation (22.3 [%]), payment in more instalments (13 [%]), lower prices of optional excursions (11.1 [%]), and lower transport costs (9.3 [%]). The result has been tested by the Chi-square test. The prevailing respondents' attitude is positive (97.2 [%]) to using the services of spa tourism in the case of financial benefits as opposed to negative (2.8 [%]). The value of the Chi-square test $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 96.33$ was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). As the majority of parents of small children gave an affirmative answer, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(2.1) is confirmed.

N ^o	<i>Categorical variables</i>		<i>Percentage</i>
1	<i>Cultural events for children</i>	Music festivals	18.9%
		Theatrical performances	15.1%
		Film festivals	14.9%
		Dress-up parties	13.4%
		Festivals of children's theatres	11.9%
		Humor festivals	11.5%
		Children's exhibitions	7.4%
		Performances	6.8%
2	<i>Would you be a spa consumer in order to visit cultural events?</i>	Yes	86.9%
		No	13.1%
3	<i>Educational courses and activities</i>	Foreign language school	23.4%
		Creative workshops	20.6%
		Acting schools	12.4%
		Painting school	11.0%
		School of music	7.9%
		Culinary school	7.9%
		Others	16.9%
4	<i>Would you be a spa consumer for educational purposes?</i>	Yes	91.8%
		No	8.2 %
5	<i>Team sports</i>	Basketball	11.5%
		Football	9.0%
		Volleyball	8.7%
		Water pool	4.5%
		Other	4.7%
	<i>Dance</i>	Ballet	5.2%
		National dance	3.7%
		Latino dance	3.7%
		Standard dancing	2.6%
	<i>Individual sports</i>	Swimming	14.8%
		Horse riding	5.2%
		Ice skating	4.5%
		Karate	4.3%
		Athletics	4.2%
		Rollers	3.0%
Chess		2.4%	
Angling		2.1%	
Other	4.3%		
6	<i>Would you be a spa consumer due to sports activities?</i>	Yes	86.9 %
		No	13.1 %
7	<i>Tourist attractions</i>	National parks	21.3 %
		Rivers and lakes	15.1 %
		Churches and monasteries	15.1 %
		Mountains	12.8 %
		Nature reserves	11.4 %
		Caves	8.7 %
		Museums	8.0 %
		Historical monuments	7.6 %
8	<i>Would you be a spa consumer due to tourist attractions?</i>	Yes	85.2 %
		No	14.8 %

Table 3. Respondent answers on research questions, categorical variables – part I

The results of answers related to this individual hypothesis H(2.2) are presented in Table 4 (row N° 3 and 4). Some of the most common responses to non-financial benefits were: the swimming pool in the hotel (19.7 [%]), room with a view of nature (14.9 [%]), quiet part of accommodation facilities (12.9 [%]). By applying the Chi-square test the prevailing positive attitude to visits in the case of non-financial benefits (97 [%]) is statistically confirmed ($p < 0.01$). The value of the Chi-square test is $\chi^2(1, N = 122) = 86.38$. As the majority of parents of small children gave an affirmative answer, it can be considered that the hypothesis H(2.2) is confirmed.

The survey confirmed the individual hypotheses H(2.1) and H(2.2), after that it can be concluded that the specific hypothesis H(2) is also confirmed, i.e. that the financial and non-financial benefits greatly encourage families with small children to visit and stay at spas.

The third special hypothesis H(3) refers to the justification of creating the conditions for the activities of small children in spas in the off-season. Answers to questions related to testing this hypothesis are presented in Table 4 (row N° 5-8) in Table 5. The affirmative attitude of respondents on the use of services of spa tourism activities for small children in the newly built or reconstructed facilities is 84.4 [%]. The value of the Chi-square test $\chi^2(1, n = 122) = 57.84$, is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

<i>N°</i>	<i>Categorical variables</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
1	<i>Types of financial benefits</i>	Lower cost of accommodation	22.3%
		Payment for spa accommodation in monthly instalments	13.0 %
		Lower price of excursions	11.1 %
		Lower transport costs	9.3 %
		Discount 30% for children aged 8 to 15	9.3%
		Free accommodation for children up to 3 years	9.0 %
		Bigger discounts for stays in off-season	8.4 %
		Free accommodation for children aged 4-7	6.8 %
		Discount 50% for children aged 8 to 15	5.6 %
		Lower ticket prices 5.3%	5.3 %
2	<i>Would you be a spa consumer because of financial benefits?</i>	Yes	97.2%
		No	2.8%
3	<i>Non-financial benefits</i>	Swimming pool at the hotel	19.7 %
		Room with a landscape view	14.9 %
		The quiet part of accommodation	12.9 %
		Separate rooms for children and parents	8.8 %
		Kitchenette in the apartment	8.1 %
		A room with a terrace	8.1 %
		Towels changed every day	7.8%
		Baby cot in the room	4.4 %
Other (air conditioning, refrigerator, clean room, toys for kids, TV)	15.2 %		
4	<i>Would you be a spa visitor due to non-financial benefits?</i>	Yes	97 %
		No	3 %
5	<i>Would you visit spas due to the facilities for children activities?</i>	Yes	84.4 %
		No	15.6 %

6	<i>Seasons for spa visits</i>	Spring	42.6 %
		Summer	36.1 %
		Fall	12%
		Winter	9.3%
7	<i>Facilities for small children activities per different seasons (first three preferences)</i>		
	<i>Spring</i>	Indoor Pool	17.1 %
		Grounds for sports and recreations	14.5 %
		Creative outdoor workshops	10.9 %
	<i>Summer</i>	Outdoor pools	24.2 %
		Aqua parks	21.5 %
		Ordered river swimming beach	8.4 %
	<i>Fall</i>	Indoor pools	19.1%
		Grounds for sports and recreation	9.1%
		Promenade	8.1 %
	<i>Winter</i>	Indoors pools	24.5 %
		Grounds for snow sports	12.4 %
		Outdoor skating rink	10.4 %
8	<i>Reasons for spa visits in particular seasons</i>	Weather conditions	36.2 %
		Holidays	23 %
		School breaks	19.1 %
		Prices	13.8 %
		Abilities to fulfil desired conditions	7.9 %

Table 4. Respondents' answers on survey questions, categorical variables – part II

Further results show that the spring (42.6 [%]) and summer (36.1 [%]) are the two most beautiful seasons for spa tourism for families with small children. By applying the Chi-square test on the respondents' answers, under the assumption of equal preference to all seasons, it is confirmed that the spring and summer seasons are prevalent for spa tourism when it comes to families with small children ($p < 0.01$) compared to winter and autumn. The value of the Chi-square test is $\chi^2(1, N=108) = 36.67$. But if we add the results, i.e. preferences for the arrival of parents with small children in off-season period and compare them with the preferences to seasonal - summer arrivals, it shows that off-season dominates.

Results of this study also show that water sports facilities are most attractive for each of the four seasons. To a question about the reasons for choosing a particular season, the most common answers were: weather conditions (36.2 [%]), holiday (23 [%]) and children's school breaks (19.1 [%]), with the price only in the fourth place (13.8 [%]).

<i>Scale variables</i>	<i>Mean (M)</i>	<i>Std. Deviation (SD)</i>
<i>Number of spa visits per year</i>	1.38	0.55
<i>Number of days per spa visits</i>	7.46	2.33
<i>Total number of spa-days per year</i>	11.31	8.55

Table 5. Respondent answers on survey questions – scale variables

Answers to questions concerning the number of visits to spas, as well as the number of days per visit are shown in Table 5. The average number of visits to the spas of families with small children, in the course of one year, based on the answers of respondents, was $M = 1.38$. The number of days that a family with small children would spend on average per a visit to a spa amounted

to something more than seven days ($M = 7.46$; $SD = 2.33$). The average number of days that one family would spend in spas, in one year, may be obtained by multiplying the values of the answers to the previous two questions and is $M = 11.31$ days per year, with a standard deviation ($SD = 8.55$).

By analyzing all the results for issues related to testing the hypothesis H(3), it can be concluded that the construction or reconstruction of additional facilities, parents with small children would be encouraged to become users of spa services in the off-season. With such results, the specific hypothesis H(3) is confirmed.

Since all three specific hypotheses H(1), H(2) and H(3) are confirmed, it can be concluded that the basic hypothesis H(0) is also confirmed: By attracting families with small children, it is possible to achieve a higher degree of occupancy rate in the spas of Republic of Serbia - thus achieving the objective of this work.

6. CONCLUSION

Spa tourism is the oldest form of organized tourism, which was referred to the development of health, medical tourism, for some time. By displaying the state of the RS spas in the last ten years, the study results suggest that the RS spas face a problem, the low level of occupancy rate - for years. Besides that, the research results confirming that by creating the favorable conditions for the stay of small children in spas, as well as by providing benefits to families with small children, such families would be encouraged to visit the RS spas. The basic hypothesis H(0) is also confirmed, that by attracting families with small children it is possible to achieve a higher degree of occupancy rate (and increase business performance) of spas in the RS. This research is just one of the possibilities to respond to the problem which has occurred in the RS spas in recent years. Other options mentioned above, leave a space for authors of this work, but also other interested researchers to further explore and examine under what conditions other target groups would be willing to visit and spend holiday in the RS spas.

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