

The Role of Tourism in the National Economy of the Republic of Croatia

Tourism plays a very important role in the national economy of the Republic of Croatia due to a range of economic benefits. These benefits primarily include income growth, employment, capital investments, and fostering regional growth and development. One of the main objectives of every country's macroeconomic policy, including Croatia's, is to maintain a balance of trade. However, Croatia constantly records deficit in foreign trade, and for many years, tourism has successfully mitigated the negative impact of Croatia's trade in goods with foreign countries. Therefore, this paper aims to highlight Croatia's dependence on tourism in its trade balance and proposes possible solutions to increase the competitiveness of other economic sectors. Furthermore, this paper uses empirical research to confirm that dependence on tourism slows down the development of other economic sectors, which poses a threat to the sustainability of the country's economic growth and development in the long run. Since Croatian tourism is largely seasonal, this thesis offers its contribution by suggesting solutions for development of alternative income sources within tourism itself, as well as for increasing the competitiveness of other economic sectors.

Keywords: *tourism, economy, foreign trade balance, Republic of Croatia*

Introduction

The importance of tourism to the national economy of Republic of Croatia arises from its numerous functions and economic effects. In Croatia, tourism development is of high socio-economic importance and therefore counts as one of the strategic objectives of economic development. Tourism development brings forth numerous economic benefits to all market participants – the private sector, the public sector, the non-profit sector, as well as the local population. Any increase in tourism demand, revenue, the local populations' standard of living, attraction and realization of capital investments, and employment leads to the public sector's improved ability to collect funds necessary for infrastructure upgrades, cultural projects, etc. Encouragement of international exchange makes for another very important economic function of tourism. This function manifests within the fluctuations in revenue (export) and expenses (import) tied to goods and services on the current transactions account. Foreign trade balance makes for one of the primary objectives of most countries' economic politics – including Croatia's. One of tourism's most defining traits is its seasonal character, which occurs due to varying weather conditions, the changing seasons of the year, and other unforeseeable circumstances (such as the global economic situation, natural disasters, political instability, change in individual preferences). It is therefore very necessary to develop a tourism offer outside of the summer season. (Ivandić and Šutalo, 2018). Accordingly, the development of alternative revenue sources within the tourism industry should be aimed at the development of special types of tourism.

1 Development of said special types of tourism, such as rural tourism, health tourism,
2 ecotourism, cultural tourism, nautical tourism, etc., will certainly have a positive
3 impact on the extension of the tourism season.

4 Tourism organizations, supranational political bodies and national
5 governments saw sustainable tourism economy as the key to recovery after the
6 COVID-19 pandemic (Jones 2022).

7 The subject matter of this paper is to analyze the importance of tourism to the
8 foreign trade balance of Republic of Croatia, with particular emphasis on the effects
9 of tourism on the total import, export, and budget of Republic of Croatia.

10 Objectives of this paper are as follows:

- 11
- 12 - to determine how much tourism contributes to the total import and export of
- 13 Republic of Croatia,
- 14 - to identify problems that arise due to the Republic of Croatia's great
- 15 dependence on tourism with regards to its foreign trade balance (determine
- 16 said level of dependence, especially in light of a possible sharp revenue drop
- 17 due to external shocks),
- 18 - to suggest solutions that might help minimize the dependence on tourism
- 19 and increase the competitiveness of other sectors (consider possible policies
- 20 that might help minimize dependence on tourism with regards to the foreign
- 21 trade balance, as well as incite the development of other economic sectors).
- 22
- 23

24 **Literature Review**

25 *Tourism as an important revenue source in the foreign trade balance of Republic of* 26 *Croatia* 27

28

29 Tourism is one of the most important economic sectors of the modern world
30 and one of its fastest growing economic branches. Tourism is an industry comprised
31 of numerous sectors and can thus be studied from various scientific perspectives. In
32 the past, most tourism-related studies have been focused primarily on its economic
33 contribution, however nowadays tourism is mostly studied as a whole, i.e., as both
34 an industry and a phenomenon centered around a person - the tourist. This approach
35 is more systemic, which means it studies all significant parts of tourism, the
36 interdependence of its structures and functions, and the way they mutually influence
37 one another (Čorak et al, 2006). Tourism can be observed from two different
38 perspectives: the economic perspective, whereby it is important to note exactly how
39 tourism impacts the development of other economic sectors, and the social
40 perspective, which mainly focuses on improvement of society's cultural level
41 through education about other cultures and maintenance of physical and
42 psychological condition. Obviously, tourism cannot exist without tourists. A tourist
43 is defined as a person, i.e., a traveler who spends more than 24 hours but less than a
44 year outside of their country of residence. "The World Tourism Organization
45 defines a tourist as a visitor or any other person who travels outside of their domicile
46 for any period under 12 months in order to take a vacation, enjoy some leisure or

1 for business purposes” (The Croatian Encyclopedia, 2021). Despite the aftermath of
2 the war and the burden created by an inefficient business structure, Croatian tourism
3 managed to survive, mostly thanks to interest from foreign markets, attractive sights
4 and its general resilience. Croatian tourism really started to thrive after the year
5 2000; moreover, it demonstrated remarkable strength during the world economic
6 crisis of 2008, boasting higher growth rates than competitors from other countries.
7 Its potential was recognized by the European Union, which led to the launch of the
8 “Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until the year 2020”. Back then, this
9 document represented the foundation for development and improvement of
10 Croatian tourism, and even though it has expired in the meantime, it still counts as
11 valuable framework for further tourism development. “Croatian Tourism
12 Development Strategy until the year 2020” makes for a starting point of
13 development, whereby it determines and points out the right direction for tourism
14 development, i.e., the main activities that will become the corner stones of the
15 tourism offer of the future. Furthermore, the Strategy also determines
16 organizational, institutional and human resources necessary to improve
17 competitiveness and generate maximum profits (Gržinić and Bevanda, 2021). It
18 enables: “a goal-oriented direction of the development and investment process,
19 efficient generation of funds from the European Union, a general understanding of
20 key directions for tourism development (which is crucial when it comes to attracting
21 domestic and foreign investors), coordinated actions of policy carriers, and systemic
22 coordination of tourism policy measures” (NN 55/2013-1119). One must also
23 mention the “Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until the year 2030”, which
24 was launched in accordance with the “Croatian National Developmental Strategy
25 until the year 2030” and the basic policies of the European Union and Republic of
26 Croatia (NN 2/2023). This Strategy represents a programmed starting point for
27 further development of Croatian tourism, and it points out the development of
28 sustainable, innovative, and resilient tourism as one of its top priorities. Another key
29 document, which should provide more detail with regards to priority areas and
30 concrete measures, is currently in the works - “The National Plan for Development
31 of Sustainable Tourism from 2021 to 2027”. “The Strategy for Development of
32 Sustainable Tourism until year 2030” defines the vision for further tourism
33 development, taking into account the principles of sustainability, as well as
34 developmental needs and potentials (Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Republic of
35 Croatia, 2022). Furthermore, it creates a framework for development of a quality
36 and contemporary tourism offer, which will inevitably increase the competitiveness
37 of Croatian tourism and launch Croatia among the leading tourist destinations in the
38 Mediterranean (Jurić Borić et al, 2018).

39

40 *The Croatian Tourism Offer*

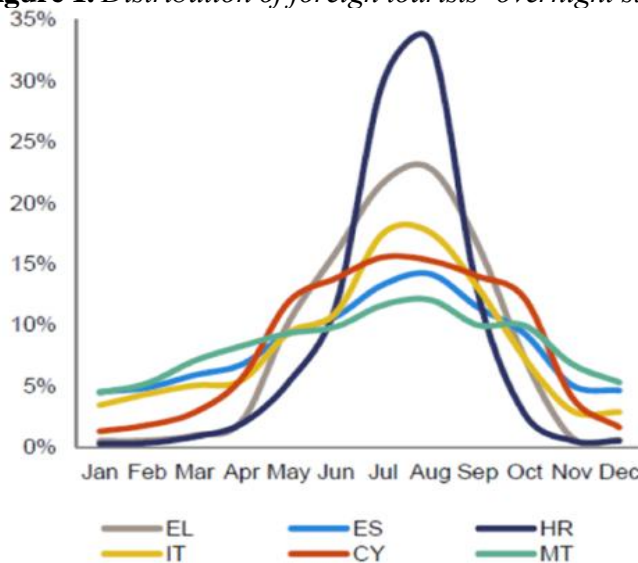
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42 Republic of Croatia is a country rich in cultural, historical, and natural heritage.
43 Even though the sea and the sun make for its most important resources, the Croatian
44 coast also boasts numerous islands, coves, clean beaches, and a wide variety of
45 nature, forests and greenery (Šimleša, 2018). Croatia also has numerous nature areas
46 that have landed a spot on the UNESCO list of world heritage, thus becoming very

1 attractive to tourists. Be that as it may, there is still a notable lack of tourism offer
 2 such as tourist attractions, amusement parks, congress centers with contemporary
 3 equipment or a tourist route that encapsules multiple sights. Furthermore, the
 4 cultural and historical heritage are sorely underutilized, and there is a notable lack
 5 of an out-of-season tourism offer. Croatian tourism offer also lacks sporty and
 6 recreational amenities (biking trails, scuba diving centers, adventure and adrenalin
 7 parks, etc.). One of the main downsides to the Croatian tourism offer is the fact that
 8 is limited by its seasonality (chart 1), whereas other Mediterranean countries provide
 9 a better tourism offer in that sense. According to statistics, Croatia generates most
 10 overnight stays during July, August, and September.

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 12

Figure 1. *Distribution of foreign tourists' overnight stays by month*



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Source: Eurostat, Tourism in Croatia: Comparison to Other Mediterranean Destinations, available at: <https://arhivanalitika.hr/blog/turizam-u-hrvatskoj-usporedba-s-drugim-mediteranskim-destinacijama/> (visited on 06.05.2023)

18 According to the international competitiveness list, Croatian tourism was
 19 ranked as the 27th most competitive national tourism in the world (NN 2/2023).
 20 Unfortunately, Croatian tourism is still pretty far behind other popular tourist
 21 destinations of the Mediterranean, however it remains in the lead when it comes to
 22 its price-point competitiveness. Croatian tourism is a top competitor when it comes
 23 to hotel rooms, rent-a-cars, and ATMs, whereas its competitiveness drops to average
 24 when it comes to healthcare, personal safety, and the quality/availability of cultural
 25 sights. On the other hand, its competitiveness was marked as downright bad when
 26 it comes to human resources and the legislative environment, which refers to legal
 27 solutions and their application (NN 55/2013-1119). The key piece of every tourism
 28 offer is its tourism product. The tourism products in Republic of Croatia can be
 29 divided into dominant products and products with a distinct development
 30 perspective (Čorak et al, 2011). The dominant products must contribute upwards of
 31 5% to the overall revenue structure. Some of the dominant products are the sun and
 32 the sea, nautical tourism, business tourism, and cultural tourism. Croatia also has

1 some products with a distinct development perspective, such as: health tourism,
2 cycling, ethno-gastronomic tourism, rural tourism, mountain tourism, adventure and
3 sports tourism, golf tourism, and eco-tourism.

4 Croatia's most significant natural attraction is definitely the sea with its
5 numerous islands and its clean, preserved beaches. Croatia has earned the number
6 one spot in Europe when it comes to the amount of its intangible heritage on the
7 UNESCO list, however, on the global plan it remains behind China and Japan (NN
8 55/2013-1119). All of this serves to attract numerous tourists from all over the
9 world. Traffic and connectivity between destinations are also very important to
10 tourists. The Croatian traffic infrastructure has been significantly upgraded during
11 the past decade, which is mostly reflected in the newly built highway network.
12 However, Croatia still needs to invest into its local and regional roads in order to
13 keep up with other countries of the European Union. The biggest successful upgrade
14 in the recent Croatian history was the completion of the Pelješac Bridge, which was
15 opened to traffic in July of 2023, thus connecting the south of Croatia with the
16 remainder of the country. Air traffic provides good connectivity with all tourism
17 destinations - notably, 5 out of 7 airports in Croatia are situated in the coastal area.
18 Some problems still occur, mostly due to airlines' lack of interest in establishing
19 non-stop flights. Railroad and ferry traffic rank last when it comes to upgrades and
20 infrastructure optimization, as some significant investments are due in order to reach
21 their full potential (Kos et al, 2020). Communal infrastructure is also due for some
22 improvements, mostly for problems such as waste drainage and waste management,
23 which pose a serious problem to both guests and locals during peak season. When
24 it comes to the issue of fresh water, Croatia is characterized by fresh, high-quality
25 drinking water.

26 27 *Croatian Tourism Demand*

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29 Even though it cannot compare to countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Greece
30 or Turkey, Croatia has been steadily recording an increase in tourists with each
31 passing year, thereby landing a spot among the most developed tourism destinations
32 in the Mediterranean. The fact that Croatia has been mentioned and lauded for its
33 cultural and natural sights by many notable global magazines and other media has
34 certainly helped elevate its status. Foreign guests play the crucial role in the structure
35 of Croatian tourism. During the summer season, the majority of overnight stays are
36 generated by the Istra County, followed by the Split-Dalmatian County, Primorje-
37 Gorski Kotar County, Zadar County, Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Šibenik-Knin
38 County, and Lika-Senj County. According to statistics and parallel analyses, the
39 number of foreign guests keeps growing with each passing year, whereas the
40 domestic guests count either remains stagnant or keeps decreasing. Foreign guests
41 mostly book their overnight stays in rooms, apartments and vacation houses,
42 followed by hotels and camps (Rašić 2020 and 2022).

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1 *Analysis of the Impact of Tourism on the Total Export and Import of Republic of*
2 *Croatia*

3
4 Due to its economic and employment potential, as well as its social and
5 ecological implications, tourism plays an important role in the European Union
6 (Eurostat, 2023). Tourism has a significant impact on the total export and import of
7 Republic of Croatia. While the contributions of export keep growing through
8 tourism services, they also cause an increase in the import of tourism products.
9 Proper tourism sector management is instrumental in achieving balance of the
10 foreign trade in Republic of Croatia. Croatia's trade balance is currently in deficit,
11 however, said deficit is significantly lowered by the tourism-generated revenue, thus
12 turning tourism into Croatia's number one export (Stipetić, 2012).

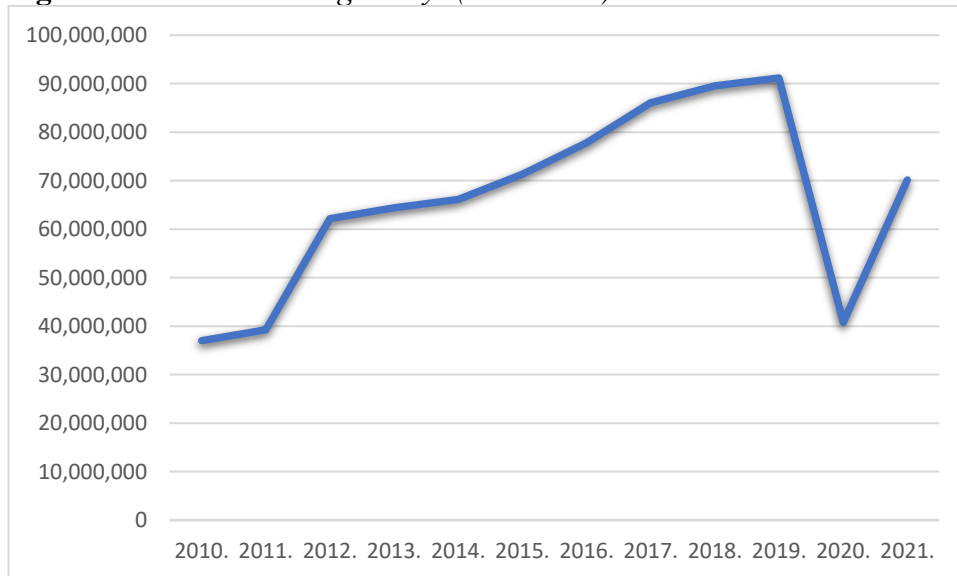
13 The total export of Republic of Croatia has been growing, however the fact that
14 the export rate for high-tech products remains low with a dramatically pronounced
15 contribution of tourism to the total export (which is usually characteristic for low-
16 income countries) is somewhat concerning (Privredni.hr, 2019). According to the
17 Croatian Bureau of Statistics, there has been a recorded increase in export by 13,7%
18 for the year 2023, thereby putting import at 5,8 billion Euro. There has also been a
19 recorded increase in import by 6,1%, which amounted to 9,8 billion Euro total
20 import. This new data provides a slight correction of the data that was first published
21 by the CBS. According to the initial information, the total for imported goods for
22 the year 2023 amounted to 3,44 billion Euro, which equaled to a growth of 9,1%
23 compared to the previous year. The initial recorded import growth was 11,1%,
24 which amounted to 6,07 billion Euro. The foreign trade deficit reached 2,7 billion
25 Euro during the first two months of 2023, whereas export managed to cover for
26 56,1% of import. Only 15% of Croatian companies export goods and services.
27 However, the companies that do export goods and services employ around 51% of
28 total employees, invest 62%, generate around 66% of revenue from their sales, and
29 invest around 73% of their total investments into further development. They also
30 generate a profit of around 76%. Further growth of such healthy and advanced
31 companies fortifies the entire economy of Republic of Croatia (Izvoz.gov.hr, 2023).

32
33 *Dependence on Tourism in the Foreign Trade Balance of Republic of Croatia*

34
35 Tourism has become a vital sector of the Croatian economy with significant
36 impact on the country's foreign trade balance (Bašić et al, 2023). This chapter
37 analyses the dependence on tourism in the foreign trade balance and considers key
38 aspects connected to it. Croatian tourism is vulnerable to risks and the possible sharp
39 drops due to external expenses. External expenses include unforeseeable events and
40 factors that can significantly impact the tourism industry and contribute to a drop in
41 tourist numbers and the overall revenue. Natural disasters such as earthquakes,
42 floods and fires could have an extremely negative impact on the Croatian tourism
43 industry. The earthquake that hit the Sisak-Moslavina County back in December of
44 2020 caused loss of human life and material harm, but it also damaged the tourism
45 infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants and attractions, leading to a decrease in
46 tourist visits. Similarly, epidemics or pandemics are another example of external

1 shocks that can cause a sharp drop in the tourism industry. This was particularly
 2 visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus initially spread during March of
 3 2020, thereby forcing the Croatian government to react, close down the borders and
 4 restrict all travel. The effects this had on tourism were devastating. Tourist visits and
 5 overnight stays, as well as tourism revenue, recorded a significant drop due to a
 6 decrease in demand, cancellations and imposed business restrictions that applied to
 7 tourist venues. Chart 2 shows the tourists' overnight stays in Republic of Croatia
 8 between the years 2010 and 2021, with notable continuous growth over the years.

9
 10 **Figure 2.** *Tourists' Overnight Stays (2010-2021)*



11
 12 Source: Author's work according to Eurostat (2021), *Nights spent at tourist accommodation*
 13 *establishments*, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TOUROCCNINAT/default/table?lang=en> (visited on 12.05.2023)
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15
 16 The coronavirus pandemic ultimately placed great pressure on the European
 17 Union members' tourism industry. According to the global statistic data, the year
 18 2020 will forever be recorded as the worst year in recent travel history. Estimates
 19 show a drop in tourism by about 60%, whereas the global travel sector recorded
 20 losses up to 840 billion Euro. Croatia is the most tourism-dependent European
 21 Union member, with tourism making up to 24% of its total GDP. Accordingly, it is
 22 no wonder that the pandemic affected trends on the domestic market. Despite the
 23 European Union's quick and efficient policies in response to the pandemic, a deep
 24 economic recession is imminent (Benko et al 2022).

25 The year 2020 remains recorded as the worst year in recent travel history,
 26 mostly due to a staggering drop of 74% in international arrivals. It is believed that
 27 this year caused great harm to the Croatian economy. In 2020, Croatia recorded a
 28 drop of 55,3% in overnight stays compared to 2019. However, there was a slight
 29 positive trend in domestic tourism. Foreign guests usually make up about 90% of
 30 total tourist, which amounts to one of the greatest shares in the Mediterranean
 31 (beside Malta and Cyprus). In 2020, domestic tourists generated about 13,3% of

1 total overnight stays which amounted to a 23,7% drop, whereas the total overnight
2 stays by foreign tourists decreased by a shocking 58% (Krešić Lončar et al, 2021).

3 The previous chart shows a dramatic decline in the number of both foreign and
4 domestic tourists for the year 2020 (Kordej - De Villam et al, 2023). Compared to
5 2019, there was a 34,1% drop in domestic arrivals and a 68,0% drop in foreign
6 arrivals in the year 2020. Furthermore, there was a 64,2% drop in total arrivals (both
7 domestic and foreign) in the year 2020, which is a direct result of the pandemic.
8 Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that the arrivals kept growing over the years,
9 reaching their peak in 2019, followed by a shocking drop in 2020 due to the
10 coronavirus pandemic. The number of tourists grew again in 2021; however, the
11 industry has still not recovered back to its former 2019 glory.

12 The travel market made a slight recovery in 2021, however due to numerous
13 travel restrictions the number of international arrivals dropped by 85% for the time
14 period between January and May of 2021 (compared to the same period in 2019).
15 Furthermore, said number dropped by 65% compared to the same period in 2020.
16 Even though there were some doubts about the success of the tourism season, a
17 favorable epidemiological situation in conjunction with successful government
18 measures resulted in a pretty good season of 2021, especially when compared to
19 2020, which was dubbed “the worst year for travel in recent history” (Krešić Lončar
20 et al, 2021). As stated earlier, the Croatian economy is largely dependent on the
21 tourism sector. Foreign tourism revenue amounted to 13 billion Euro, which makes
22 up 19% of the country’s GDP (Stojić, 2023). Tourism activities contribute a
23 whopping 88,3% to the direct gross tourism value in the Croatian economy (Rašić,
24 2020). For comparison’s sake, tourism revenue amounted to 18,3% of GDP in 2018
25 and 21% of GDP in 2019, whereas said numbers dropped to 8,9% in 2020 and
26 15,8% in 2021 (due to the pandemic). However, even these diminished tourism
27 revenues remained the highest in the entire European Union when expressed as
28 shares in the total GDP (Lidermedia.hr, 2022).

29 The Croatian Bureau of Statistics’ data (Tourism by numbers 2021) shows that
30 the national GDP amounted to 50.224 billion Euro in the year 2020, and 57.232
31 billion Euro in the year 2021. Tourism-generated revenue amounted to 9.121,8
32 billion Euro in the year 2020, and 4.813,5 billion Euro in the year 2021. The share
33 of tourism in the national GDP was 9,6% in the year 2020 and 15,9% in the year
34 2021. Tourism-related activities generated 11,8% of the total GDP in 2019. The
35 gross added value of tourism-related activities amounted to 10,9 billion Euro for the
36 same year (24,4% of the total gross added value) (Lidermedia.hr 2022).

37 According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, revenue generated from
38 foreign tourists amounted to 13,1 billion Euro in 2022, which is an increase of 44%
39 compared to 2021; moreover, this also amounts to an increase of 24% compared to
40 the record year 2019. Looking at the data from the year 2020 (the pandemic year),
41 it is possible to conclude that the pandemic caused a sharp decline in revenue – a
42 drop of 89% compared to 2021, to be exact. The aforementioned improvements
43 achieved in 2021 were probably directly linked to the government measures and
44 quality sector preparation, which served to maintain stability in the national tourism
45 industry (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2023).

1 All of the above clearly demonstrates how external shocks can cause a sudden
2 drop in tourism. It is important that the tourism industry of Republic of Croatia
3 remain conscious of said risks and implement measures to mitigate their effects.
4 This can include development of crisis management strategies, diversification of the
5 tourism offer, as well as promotion of lesser known destinations in order to diminish
6 the dependence on several main tourism centers. Moreover, investments into
7 infrastructure for prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, as well as
8 development of safety protocols and epidemic suppression measures could be
9 crucial to minimization of the aforementioned external shocks. External shocks can
10 be unforeseeable and often times arise from various sources. It is therefore
11 indispensable to always keep an eye on global trends, analyze risks and implement
12 prompt and flexible crisis-management strategies in the tourism industry (Bašić et
13 al, 2023).

14
15

16 **Methodology/Materials and Methods**

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18 Research was conducted via a survey questionnaire. The obtained primary data
19 has been processed using SPSS Statistics. The survey questionnaire was created
20 using Google Forms. The participants remained completely anonymous. The
21 questionnaire was sent out via email, Viber, and WhatsApp or posted on various
22 Facebook groups. The obtained data was processed using the SPSS Statistics
23 program. Hypotheses H1 and H2 have been formed.

24

25 H1: A sharp drop in revenue due to external shocks causes problems in the foreign
26 trade balance. In order to prevent these problems, more attention should be paid to the
27 tourism offer outside of the summer season.

28 H2: High levels of dependence on tourism tend to slow down the development of other
29 economic sectors in Republic of Croatia, which poses a threat to the sustainability of
30 economic growth and further development of the country in the long run.

31

32

33 **Results**

34

35 Research results are primary data obtained via the survey questionnaire and
36 used to conduct the analysis. The survey was comprised of 26 closed type questions
37 and was available from May 1st to May 17th of 2023. The survey was completed by
38 204 respondents. The first portion of the survey referred to the socio-demographic
39 status of the respondents, the second portion evaluated the respondents' satisfaction
40 with the Croatian tourism offer, its contents and its prices. The remaining questions
41 were offered in the form of a Likert scale, whereby the respondents evaluated
42 predetermined claims on a scale from 1 to 5. Number 1 on the scale corresponded
43 to "Strongly disagree", "Not promoted at all", and "Zero information", whereas
44 number 5 corresponded to "Completely agree", "Very well promoted", and
45 "Excellent" (Benšić and Šuvak 2013).

46 The total respondent count was 204. 66,2% of respondents were female whereas the
47 remaining 33,8% were male.

1

2 **Table 1.** *Sample Description (n=204)*

	n	%
SEX		
Male	69	33,8%
Female	135	66,2%
SUBJECT AGE		
18-24	5	2,5%
25-34	32	15,7%
35-44	99	48,5%
45-54	44	21,6%
55-64	22	10,8%
Over 65	2	1,0%
LEVEL OF EDUCATION		
Elementary school	4	2,0%
High school	86	42,2%
Bachelor's degree	36	17,6%
Master's degree	73	35,8%
PhD.	5	2,5%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
Entrepreneur; Artisan	7	3,4%
Employee of the Private sector	86	42,2%
Employee of the Public sector	93	45,6%
Unemployed	5	2,5%
Student	3	1,5%
Retired	10	4,9%

3 Source: Author's Work

4

5 Table 2 shows the values of the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha).
6 Generally, Cronbach Alpha values above 0.7 are considered acceptable, whereas
7 values above 0.8 signify high reliability. In this case, the Cronbach Alpha
8 coefficient's value is 0.668, which is lower than 0.7 and thus indicates a certain
9 variability or inconsistency in responses. The value of the Cronbach Alpha
10 coefficient based on standardized items is also 0.676, which is very similar to the
11 results obtained based on the original items. This suggests that the standardization
12 didn't have a significant impact on internal consistency. In short, the results indicate
13 a moderate internal consistency of the measuring instrument. The research was
14 directed at 12 particles that were answered by respondents via a scale from 1 to 5.
15 Given that the reliability coefficient amounted to 0,668, one can deem the reliability
16 of the measuring scale acceptable.

17

18 **Table 2.** *Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach Alpha)*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.668	.676	12

19 Source: Author's Work

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Table 3. shows descriptive statistics results for claims related to H1, which is as follows:

A sharp drop in revenue due to external shocks causes problems in the foreign trade balance. In order to prevent these problems, more attention should be paid to the tourism offer outside of the summer season. The respondents answered via a certain degree of agreement or disagreement with a certain claim on the Likert scale (from 1 to 5). The mean value shows the arithmetic mean of responses to a certain claim. The highest mean was recorded in response to the claim “External shocks (such as pandemics, natural disasters and political crises) have a negative impact on the Croatian tourism season” (3,93). The lowest mean was recorded in relation to the claim “Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are acceptable” (2,35).

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics for H1*

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I am appropriately informed about the local culture, history and sights of every tourism destination I visit in Republic of Croatia	204	1	5	3.35	.921	.849
Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are appropriate	204	1	5	2.35	.974	.949
The Croatian tourism offer is diverse and provides high-quality tourism products and services	204	1	5	3.47	.970	.940
Lesser-known tourism destinations in Republic of Croatia aren't sufficiently promoted	204	1	5	2.68	1.158	1.341
The Croatian tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups (such as families, adventurers, history enthusiasts, gastro-tourists)	204	1	5	3.87	.906	.821

Dependence on tourism poses a problem to the foreign trade balance of Republic of Croatia	204	1	5	3.74	.852	.725
External shocks (such as pandemics, natural disasters and political crises) have a negative impact on the Croatian tourism season	204	1	5	3.93	.982	.965
Valid N (listwise)	204					

1 Source: Author's Work

2

3 Table 4 shows descriptive statistics results for claims related to H2, which is as
4 follows:

5 High levels of dependence on tourism tend to slow down the development of
6 other economic sectors in Republic of Croatia, which poses a threat to the
7 sustainability of economic growth and further development of the country in the
8 long run. The respondents answered via a certain degree of agreement or
9 disagreement with a certain claim on the Likert scale (from 1 to 5). The mean value
10 shows the arithmetic mean of responses to a certain claim. The highest mean was
11 recorded in response to the claim “Tourism represents an important source of
12 revenue for Republic of Croatia” (4,34). The lowest mean was recorded in relation
13 to the claim “High levels of dependence on tourism slows down the development of
14 other economic sectors in Republic of Croatia” (3,63).

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Table 4. *Descriptive statistics for H2*

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Tourism represents an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia	204	1	5	4.34	.842	.709
Tourism provides a significant contribution to the economic development of Republic of Croatia	204	1	5	4.23	.881	.776
Republic of Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new technologies	204	1	5	4.29	.814	.662
High levels of dependence on tourism slows down the development of other economic sectors in Republic of Croatia	204	1	5	3.63	1.016	1.033

It is necessary to invest more funds into development of other economic sectors in order to decrease Croatia's dependency on tourism	204	1	5	4.22	.855	.732
Valid N (listwise)	204					

1 Source: Author's Work

2

3 In order to prove the correlation of statistical significance of variables with
4 hypothesis H1, it was necessary to conduct a t-test. Based on the t-test results, it is
5 possible to come to a conclusion about the statistical significance of the variables –
6 *information received about sights and amenities offered by the destination, prices*
7 *in Croatian tourism, diversity and quality of the Croatian tourism offer, promotion*
8 *of destinations, direction of tourism offer toward interest groups, issues of*
9 *dependence on tourism as well as negative influences on the tourism season, as*
10 shown in table 5.

11

12 **Table 5.** *T-test – hypothesis H1 – 95% significance level*

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I am appropriately informed about the local culture, history and sights of every tourism destination I visit in Republic of Croatia	204	3.35	.921	.065
Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are appropriate	204	2.35	.974	.068
The Croatian tourism offer is diverse and provides high-quality tourism products and services	204	3.47	.970	.068
Lesser-known tourism destinations in Republic of Croatia aren't sufficiently promoted	204	2.68	1.158	.081
The Croatian tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups (such as families, adventurers, history enthusiasts, gastro-tourists)	204	3.87	.906	.063
Dependence on tourism poses a problem to the foreign trade balance of Republic of Croatia	204	3.74	.852	.060

External shocks (such as pandemics, natural disasters and political crises) have a negative impact on the Croatian tourism season	204	3.93	.982	.069
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1 Source: Author's Work

2
3 Based on the t-test conducted for hypothesis H1, table 6 points toward the fact
4 that the respondents lacked information on lesser-known destinations in Croatia, and
5 found prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism
6 unacceptable. Therefore, these variables weren't statistically significant to the
7 hypothesis, given that the mean of said variables amounted to less than 3. According
8 to the results, the remaining five variables are statistically significant to hypothesis
9 H1.

10 **Table 6.** *T-test – hypothesis H1 – 95% significance level (test value=0)*

One-Sample Test							
Test Value = 0							
	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p		Lower	Upper
I am appropriately informed about the local culture, history and sights of every tourism destination I visit in Republic of Croatia	51,907	203	0,000	0,000	3,348	3,22	3,48
Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are appropriate	34,503	203	0,000	0,000	2,353	2,22	2,49
The Croatian tourism offer is diverse and provides high-quality tourism products and services	51,127	203	0,000	0,000	3,471	3,34	3,60
Lesser-known tourism destinations in Republic of Croatia aren't sufficiently promoted	33,068	203	0,000	0,000	2,681	2,52	2,84

The Croatian tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups (such as families, adventurers, history enthusiasts, gastro-tourists)	61,039	203	0,000	0,000	3,873	3,75	4,00
Dependence on tourism poses a problem to the foreign trade balance of Republic of Croatia	62,728	203	0,000	0,000	3,740	3,62	3,86
External shocks (such as pandemics, natural disasters and political crises) have a negative impact on the Croatian tourism season	57,089	203	0,000	0,000	3,926	3,79	4,06

1 Source: Author's Work

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In order to prove a correlation between the statistical significance of the variables and hypothesis H2, it was necessary to conduct a t-test. Based on the t-test results, it is possible to come to a conclusion about the statistical significance of the variables – *tourism as an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia, importance of tourism to the economic development of Croatia, strengthening of the economy via innovations and new technologies, deceleration of development of other sectors due to the country's great dependence on tourism, and the necessity to invest in other economic sectors*, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. T-test – hypothesis H2 – 95% significance level

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Tourism represents an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia	204	4.34	.842	.059
Tourism provides a significant contribution to the economic development of Republic of Croatia	204	4.23	.881	.062
Republic of Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new technologies	204	4.29	.814	.057
High levels of dependence on tourism slows down the development of other economic sectors in Republic of Croatia	204	3.63	1.016	.071
It is necessary to invest more funds into development of other economic sectors in order to	204	4.22	.855	.060

decrease Croatia's dependency on tourism				
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1 Source: Author's Work

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Based on the t-test conducted for hypothesis H1, Table 8 points to the fact that the respondents had insufficient knowledge about deceleration of other sectors' development due to tourism dependency. According to the obtained results and given that the arithmetic mean of all variables exceeded 3, it is possible to conclude that all variables remain statistically significant to hypothesis H2.

Table 8. *T-test – hypothesis H2 – 95% significance level (test value=0)*

One-Sample Test							
Test Value = 0							
	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p		Lower	Upper
Tourism represents an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia	73,657	203	0,000	0,000	4,343	4,23	4,46
Tourism provides a significant contribution to the economic development of Republic of Croatia	68,490	203	0,000	0,000	4,225	4,10	4,35
Republic of Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new technologies	75,390	203	0,000	0,000	4,294	4,18	4,41
High levels of dependence on tourism slows down the development of other economic sectors in Republic of Croatia	50,978	203	0,000	0,000	3,627	3,49	3,77
It is necessary to invest more funds into development of other economic sectors in order to decrease Croatia's dependency on tourism	70,397	203	0,000	0,000	4,216	4,10	4,33

1 Source: Author's Work

2

3 Table 9 shows variance analysis conducted to test hypothesis H1. This analysis
4 was used to determine whether significant differences in thoughts, opinions and
5 answers given by respondents were present.

6

- 7 • *Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are*
8 *appropriate*

9

10 There is a very slight variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 0.189), with
11 a low mean square (Mean Square = 0.047).

12 F-value (F = 0.049) is statistically insignificant (Sig. = 0.995).

13 Analysis shows that there are no statistically significant differences when it
14 comes to the perception of prices between groups.

15

- 16 • *The Croatian tourism offer is diverse and provides high-quality tourism*
17 *products and services*

18

19 There is moderate variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 2.365) with an
20 average mean (Mean Square = 0.591).

21 F-value (F = 0.624) is statistically insignificant (Sig. = 0.646).

22 Analysis shows that there are no statistically significant differences when it
23 comes to the perception of the diversity of the tourism offer and the quality of goods
24 and services between groups.

25

- 26 • *Lesser-known tourism destinations in Republic of Croatia aren't sufficiently*
27 *promoted*

28

29 There is high variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 11.390) with a high
30 mean square (Mean Square = 2.847).

31 F-value (F = 2.172) has an approximate statistical significance (Sig. = 0.074).

32 Analysis shows that there is a difference in perception of promotion of lesser-
33 known destinations, however, its statistical significance isn't high.

34

- 35 • *The Croatian tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups*

36

37 There is high variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 19.610) with a high
38 mean square (Mean Square = 4.903).

39 F-value (F = 6.633) has high statistical significance (Sig. < 0.001).

40 Analysis shows that there are statistically significant differences in perception of the
41 necessity to direct the tourism offer toward certain interest groups.

42

- 43 • *Dependence on tourism poses a problem to the foreign trade balance of*
44 *Republic of Croatia*

45

1 There is high variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 14.633) with a high
2 mean square (Mean Square = 3.658).

3 F-value ($F = 5.490$) has high statistical significance (Sig. < 0.001).

4 Analysis shows that there are statistically significant differences in perception
5 of the problem that tourism dependency poses to the foreign trade balance.

- 7 • *I am appropriately informed about the local culture, history and sights of
8 every tourism destination I visit in Republic of Croatia*

9 There is moderate variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 8.179) with a
10 mean square (Mean Square = 2.045).

11 F-value ($F = 2.480$) has statistical significance on level $p < 0.05$ (Sig. = 0.045).

12 Analysis show that there are statistically significant differences in perception
13 of knowledge about culture, history and sights of the destination between groups.

14 **Table 9.** ANOVA test for hypothesis H1 – 95% significance level
15

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Prices of accommodations, foods and beverages in Croatian tourism are appropriate	Between Groups	.189	4	.047	.049	.995
	Within Groups	192.399	199	.967		
	Total	192.588	203			
The Croatian tourism offer is diverse and provides high-quality tourism products and services	Between Groups	2.365	4	.591	.624	.646
	Within Groups	188.459	199	.947		
	Total	190.824	203			
Lesser-known tourism destinations in Republic of Croatia aren't sufficiently promoted	Between Groups	11.390	4	2.847	2.172	.074
	Within Groups	260.899	199	1.311		
	Total	272.289	203			
The Croatian tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups (such as families, adventurers, history enthusiasts, gastro-tourists)	Between Groups	19.610	4	4.903	6.633	.000
	Within Groups	147.076	199	.739		
	Total	166.686	203			

Dependence on tourism poses a problem to the foreign trade balance of Republic of Croatia	Between Groups	14.633	4	3.658	5.490	.000
	Within Groups	132.597	199	.666		
	Total	147.230	203			
I am appropriately informed about the local culture, history and sights of every tourism destination I visit in Republic of Croatia	Between Groups	8.179	4	2.045	2.480	.045
	Within Groups	164.110	199	.825		
	Total	172.289	203			

1 Source: Author's Work

2

3 Table 10 variance analysis conducted to test hypothesis H1. This analysis was
4 used to determine whether significant differences in thoughts, opinions and answers
5 given by respondents were present.

6

- 7 • *Tourism represents an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia*

8

9 There is moderate variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 4.167) with a
10 mean square (Mean Square = 1.042).

11 F-value (F = 1.483) has no statistical significance on level $p < 0.05$ (Sig. =
12 0.209).

13 Analysis shows that there are no statistically significant differences in
14 perception of the importance of tourism as a revenue source between groups.

15

- 16 • *Tourism provides a significant contribution to the economic development of
17 Republic of Croatia*

18

19 There is a very slight variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 0.596), with
20 a low mean square (Mean Square = 0.149).

21 F-value (F = 0.189) has no statistical significance on level $p < 0.05$ (Sig. = 0.944).

22 Analysis shows that there are no statistically significant differences in
23 perception of contribution of tourism to economic growth between groups.

24

- 25 • *Republic of Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new
26 technologies*

27 There is moderate variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 7.937) with a
28 mean square (Mean Square = 1.984).

29 F-value (F = 3.124) has statistical significance on level $p < 0.05$ (Sig. = 0.016).

30 Analysis shows that there are statistically significant differences in perception
31 of the need to strengthen the economy via innovations and new technologies
32 between groups.

33

- 1 • *It is necessary to invest more funds into development of other economic*
 2 *sectors in order to decrease Croatia's dependency on tourism*

3
 4 There is a significant variation between groups (Sum of Squares = 25.047) with
 5 a high mean square (Mean Square = 6.262).

6 F-value ($F = 10.093$) has high statistical significance (Sig. < 0.001).

7 Analysis shows that there are statistically significant differences in perception
 8 of the need to invest into other sectors in order to decrease Croatia's dependency on
 9 tourism between groups.

10
 11 **Table 10.** ANOVA test for hypothesis H2 – 95% significance level

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tourism represents an important source of revenue for Republic of Croatia	Between Groups	4.167	4	1.042	1.483	.209
	Within Groups	139.814	199	.703		
	Total	143.980	203			
Tourism provides a significant contribution to the economic development of Republic of Croatia	Between Groups	.596	4	.149	.189	.944
	Within Groups	157.031	199	.789		
	Total	157.627	203			
Republic of Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new technologies	Between Groups	7.937	4	1.984	3.124	.016
	Within Groups	126.416	199	.635		
	Total	134.353	203			
It is necessary to invest more funds into development of other economic sectors in order to decrease Croatia's dependency on tourism	Between Groups	25.047	4	6.262	10.093	.000
	Within Groups	123.463	199	.620		
	Total	148.510	203			

12 Source: Author's Work

13 14 15 Discussion

16
 17 According to the obtained data, it is possible to conclude that more women
 18 (66,2%) than men (33,8%) took part in this research. The majority of respondents
 19 were in the 35-44 age bracket (48,5%), whereas only 1% of respondents belonged
 20 to the "over 65" age bracket. Furthermore, 42,2% of respondents were employed in
 21 the private sector, 45,6% of respondents were employed in the public sector, and

1 only 1,5% of respondents belonged to the student population. The majority of
2 respondents were high school graduates (42,2%). A mere 2,5% of respondents only
3 completed elementary education. Research results suggest that the respondents
4 usually used Croatian tourism services two or three times per year, whereby they
5 preferred a beach vacation that lasted anywhere from one week to ten days. The
6 majority of respondents stated that their engagement in tourism activities in Croatia
7 usually cost between 500 and 1000 Euro per year or between 1000 and 2000 Euro
8 per year, and they mostly took part in the activities offered by the local tourist board.
9 Most respondents were well informed about the culture, history and sights of the
10 destination they were visiting, however 36,3% of respondents found prices of
11 accommodations, food, and beverages unacceptable. Furthermore, 43,1% of
12 respondents found the Croatian tourism offer diverse and thought it was
13 characterized by high-quality products and services. Approximately half of the
14 respondents agreed that tourism made for an important source of revenue for
15 Republic of Croatia, moreover, almost half of the respondents agreed that tourism
16 significantly contributed to the economic development of the county. Respondents
17 found ecological standards and sustainability of the tourism offer very important,
18 however; they were only partially satisfied with the current tourism offer and
19 services. 67,2% of the respondents were partially familiar with other industries that
20 could contribute to economic growth in Croatia. The majority of respondents agreed
21 that Croatia should strengthen its economy via innovations and new technologies.
22 Furthermore, the majority of respondents stated that they mostly visited lesser-
23 known Croatian destinations and agreed that these destinations don't get enough
24 promotion. When it comes to the tourism offer, respondents found activities such as
25 hiking, cycling and water sports only partially important. Most respondents believed
26 that the tourism offer should be directed at certain interest groups. According to this
27 research, respondents found that tourism dependency poses a problem to the foreign
28 trade balance of Republic of Croatia and that external shocks have a negative impact
29 on the tourism season. They also found that great levels of tourism dependency
30 decelerate the development of other economic sectors; moreover, they agreed it was
31 necessary to invest more funds into other economic sectors in order to decrease said
32 tourism dependency. Further research employed descriptive statistics in order to
33 confirm or reject the following hypotheses:

34
35 *H1: A sharp drop in revenue due to external shocks causes problems in the foreign*
36 *trade balance. In order to prevent these problems, more attention should be paid to the*
37 *tourism offer outside of the summer season.*
38

39 According to the obtained data, it is possible to conclude that the respondents
40 agreed with most variables and that there is a positive correlation between variables
41 that are statistically significant to hypothesis H1. Hypothesis H1 has therefore been
42 confirmed.

43
44 *H2: High levels of dependence on tourism tend to slow down the development of other*
45 *economic sectors in Republic of Croatia, which poses a threat to the sustainability of*
46 *economic growth and further development of the country in the long run.*
47

1 According to the obtained data, it is possible to conclude that the respondents
2 agreed with all variables and that there is a positive correlation between variables
3 that are statistically significant to hypothesis H2. Hypothesis H2 has therefore been
4 confirmed.

5 Future research should pick a representative sample that includes respondents
6 from all over Croatia. It would be useful to include certain tourism management
7 institutions that monitor sustainability indicators for tourism (such as agencies,
8 bureaus, institutes, etc.). It could also be useful to compare the conducted analysis
9 with other Mediterranean countries that provide examples of good practice.

10 There are certain limitations to this research. The survey questionnaire was sent
11 out via email, Viber, WhatsApp, and various Facebook groups, and was
12 subsequently filled out by 204 respondents. This represents one of the fundamental
13 research limitations, as it was not filled out by respondents from all regions of
14 Republic of Croatia. The fact that the survey questionnaire was filled out by 66,2%
15 of women and only 33,8% of men represents another limitation. Given that the
16 questionnaire was filled out by only 2,5% of respondents from the 18-24 age bracket
17 and only 1% of retirees, it is impossible to draw conclusions about these
18 populations' opinions. The same can be said for unemployed persons, given that
19 only 2,5% of them took part in this research. Another limitation is the small number
20 of postgraduates (2,5%), students (1,5%) and persons who only completed
21 elementary education (2,0%) who took part in this research.

22 23 24 **Conclusion**

25
26 Tourism is one of the most important economic branches in Croatia. Republic
27 of Croatia is becoming a very attractive tourist destination, and it is therefore
28 imperative to increase the competitiveness of its tourism in the future. Croatia is a
29 county with an abundance of tradition, history, and natural beauty. However,
30 Croatian tourism is characterized by its seasonality, which is why it is necessary to
31 develop specific forms of tourism in order to stretch the season. Apart from beach
32 vacations, tourists are starting to crave contents in accordance with their needs. It is
33 therefore necessary to adapt the tourism offer to the current market demands. It is
34 very important to develop alternative sources, such as rural tourism, health tourism,
35 wellness tourism, sustainable tourism, cultural tourism, etc. Moreover, it is
36 necessary to digitalize the tourism industry in order to achieve sustainability and
37 competitiveness. Croatia is one of the most tourism-dependent European Union
38 member states, which is why it is crucial to appropriately manage the tourism sector
39 and achieve foreign trade balance. One of the biggest problems arises from the
40 decades-old foreign trade deficit on the Croatian books, which has significantly
41 affected the economic stability of the country. Tourism is vulnerable to
42 unforeseeable events and factors that could have a negative impact on the tourism
43 industry, so it is imperative to continuously analyze risks and promptly implement
44 crisis management strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how external
45 shocks can have a negative impact on tourism back in 2020, when a dramatic

1 decrease in the number of foreign and domestic tourists caused a great drop in
2 revenue and subsequently GDP.

3 Great dependency on tourism leads to deceleration of development of other
4 sectors (such as industry, agriculture, and information technology). It is very
5 important to diversify export by expansion of current markets. Croatia has ample
6 potential due to its numerous natural resources, which means it could open up new
7 export possibilities if it made some investments into modernization of agricultural
8 production or provided some support to local producers. Significant investments
9 into other sectors apart from tourism, as well as funding for development of
10 innovations and technologies could improve the overall competitiveness and create
11 new workplaces.

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