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# THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION ON THE DECISION TO VISIT SPA DESTINATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES – EXAMPLE OF SERBIAN SPAS

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## Abstract

*Striving to achieve the development of spa resorts in developing countries, market actors in these areas are promoting their spa products in the manner and means to become recognizable on the tourist market. The process of globalization and changes in the supply and demand of spa resorts products have caused changes in the mode of communication between the performers and creators of the spa offerings on the one hand, and users of spa products, on the other hand. Traditional means of promotion are strengthened by digital communication devices that allow for the establishment of continuous and long-term communication. This paper deals with traditional and digital communication in the promotion of spa tourism destinations in developing countries with a special emphasis on spas in Serbia.*

Key Words: *developing countries, Serbian spas, spa tourism, promotion, traditional communication, digital communication.*

JEL classification: *L83, M37, O39*

## Introduction

Developing countries occupy an increasingly important position in the world economy (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Bekaert & Harvey, 1997; Frankel & Rose, 1996). Globalization and the rapid growth of the world economy have conditioned the efforts of the less developed countries to engage their resources and economic policy measures, reach the approximate

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level of development, as well as the most developed economies. In the conditions of strong competition, they were faced with the challenge of providing financial resources to achieve their goals. Despite the concerns expressed in the provision of human, financial and material resources, developing countries represent a significant segment in terms of modern economic development. During the early 1980s, people often used the term "newly industrialized economies" to describe the rapidly growing Asian and Latin American economies, which have adopted liberal policies (The Boia Asia Forum, 2009).

In modern conditions of tourism development, spa tourism takes on growing importance for the economic and marketing strategies of hoteliers, resorts and tourist destinations in order to attract tourists (Azman & Chan, 2010). Although the spa has a long tradition of development (Skowron et al., 2014), its rapid expansion is contributed by the high costs of medical treatment in developed countries, long waiting lists, developed infrastructure of air transport and a favorable exchange rate (Connell et al., 2006). These trends have contributed to directing tourism demand to destinations of spa tourism in developing countries.

In its business, the management of the spa destination communicates with current and potential visitors. Creators of the spa's marketing offer should first understand the behavior of tourists in making the decision on the visit to the destination, as well as the stages of the process of purchase of spa products. Marketing communication and promotion play an important role in informing customers about the destinations on the tourist market and making them interested. In addition to the quality of adequately formulated and integrated spa products, it is necessary to offer a matching destination that contributes to personal requirements of tourists in order to be selected. If spa tourists already have some tourist experience, they will remember the experience and then on the basis of it make a decision about the visit to a destination and in that way contribute to meeting their tourist needs.

However, if a tourist is the user of the spa for the first time, it is necessary to collect information from external sources, which can be personal or marketing. The collection of personal information from friends, family members or someone whose opinion we highly value has a significant influence in deciding the destination of the visit. Marketing word of mouth, as well as the share of the tourist experience through social networks (word of mouse), are for tourists reliable source of information

for potential tourists due to the specific tourist services such as intangibility and the inability to test samples before buying.

### **Spa tourism in developing countries**

In order to complete the analysis of the specifics of spa tourism in developing countries, the paper analyzed Hungary, Serbia, Poland and Romania, which, according to IMF data (according to the level of GDP) are classified into the category of developing countries (IMF, 2016). Spas in Romania are mainly aimed at the domestic market, but some of them have the potential to meet the needs of foreign tourists. Natural potential of Romania lies in the 1300 mineral springs, which represent 30% of the total water in Europe. Nonetheless, spa tourism is relatively poorly developed (Fosztó & Kiss, 2011). The initial impulse for attracting foreign tourists is investments, which would complete the offer of spa tourism in Romania. Although there are resources for the development of spa tourism, the actual situation is much different. The Master Plan for National Tourism Development of Romania (2007) documented the existence of resources (117 locations with therapeutic properties of which 29 were declared spas of national significance and 32 that have been deemed spas of local importance), as well as aggravating circumstances for further development. In Romania, there are three types of spa products: disease health care-treatment, rehabilitation-stimulating recovery, and wellness- fitness and well-being of the entire body. On the other hand, the successful development of spa tourism in Romania is hampered by the image of spas as places for the sick and the elderly, the relatively low share of accommodation facilities in spas in the total accommodation offer, the lack of data on revenues from spa tourism, the fact that people come to the spa for treatment through the state health insurance and poor infrastructure in the spas.

Hungary is an important destination for spa tourism in the European and international market. Hungary is a country with an abundance of thermal waters; healing thermal waters of high abundance can be found at more than 80% of the territory of Hungary (Milićević & Jovanović, 2015). Its position is based on the existence of a variety of mineral and medicinal water sources unique in Central and Eastern Europe. In Hungary, 51 locations were identified as medical spas, while in Budapest there are 7 as separate entities. Hungarian spas are famous owing to the uniqueness of resources, temperature, thermal waters and their different mineral composition. Unlike Romania, Hungary with its equipment meets the

high standards of quality offer, resulting in both domestic and foreign tourists being equally represented on the tourist market (Michalkó & Rátz, 2010). Modern trends point to the necessity to adapt to contemporary Hungarian tourist demand through the use of water resources for the development of sports and recreational and entertainment facilities.

Serbia has a long tradition in the development of spa tourism, which is based on the curative factor in the form of healing thermal mineral water, favorable climatic conditions, mineral mud and favourable conditions for rest and recreation. However, despite the existence of objective conditions for a successful development, quality of spa tourism is inadequate. Due to the political situation and the bad image of Serbia as a country, spa tourism has lagged behind other developing countries, which have successfully developed this form of tourism. The rise of spa tourism was particularly expressed in the first decades after World War II, when the government encouraged social policy, and the legal status of the spas as natural sanatoriums was granted to them. Strengthening of market relations in the economy at the end of the 1960s, the focus of tourism development in Serbia was transferred to the mountain resorts and larger cities, and from then on, the spa tourism recorded stagnation and decline in the total tourism in our country. After a major crisis in the last decade of the 20th century, spa tourism in the first years of the 21st century achieved some progress, but it was realized at a slower pace compared to the mountain and city tourism (Jovičić, 2008). Serbia has a limited growth potential of spa tourism in the global market. Accordingly, the Serbian spa tourism products have not been sufficiently commercialized in the international market, and its future development is based on domestic guests (Šušić & Spasojević, 2011). Similarly to the situation in Serbia, the political climate affected the development of spa tourism in Poland. The socio-economic transformation that took place after 1989 had an impact on changes in the management of the economy at the micro and macro level. A significant problem of spa tourism in Poland is unused water potential. Although 80% of Poland lies on thermal springs, no spas in this country use the wealth of this resource even though the positive impact of water on health treatments has been proved (Szromek & Romaniuk, 2014).

Spas in developing countries have a long tradition in the development of this form of tourism thanks to natural healing factor. On the other hand, their entry into the international tourist market was slowed down due to

insufficient investment in the development and promotion of tourist offer. In order to adapt to the modern tourist demand and occupy a competitive position on the tourism market, countries in Central and Eastern Europe have recently invested significant funds in the development and promotion of traditional medical spas. Through social and health policy, the state still provides significant subsidies for medical treatment and travel. In many countries of Central and Eastern Europe, spa tourism is considered to be the dominant form of social tourism and provides traveling for treatment in the last 40 to 50 years (Puczkó & Bachvarov, 2006). Trend development of spa tourism as a form of tourism financed by the state for the members of all social classes shows the lack of the economic viability of operations of the spas in developing countries. In order to improve their offer and attract the rich and sophisticated tourist demand, it is necessary to differentiate the product, which is offered to people who come for treatment through the health insurance fund and tourists, who go to spas mainly for leisure and relaxation.

### **The influence of traditional and digital communication on the purchase of spa tourism products**

During the process of making a decision about visiting spa destinations, potential tourists gather information to help them to choose between several alternatives. Visitors make the decision on the specific destination based on promotional activities of the spa management's destination. Until the mid-20th century and the advent of television, the impact of traditional media was more significant, and the development of the Internet in the late 20th century made it possible for tourists to gather information in a faster, simpler and more efficient way. The resort spa and destination spa users usually resort to the Internet for information about the spa offer or price information (Johnson & Redman, 2008). By creating easily accessible information and providing travel for tourists in line with technological advances, spa destinations can achieve a competitive advantage over their competitors (Okech, 2014).

The term Web 2.0, which has been used since 2004 (also known as "social web"), describes the use of digital technology. Since then, mobile digital devices, such as smart phones, tablet computers and other devices that can connect to the Internet from any location, have become widely deployed and user-oriented. Also, social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are becoming more developed enabling content creation and sharing of users' personal information. Web 2.0 is

characterized by activity that is now able to act as users and creators of social networks. (Ritzer et al., 2012). The future of the Web represents Web 3.0, when the exchange of data between devices without human intervention will be enabled (Miorandi et al., 2012). Most companies in the tourist sector mostly use the Web 2.0 technologies. In Serbia, we can still talk about Web 1.0 stage with the use of static websites and sporadic use of social networking (Web 2.0) in the promotion of spa resorts. Many tourist companies use websites, but not in a meaningful way (Stankov et al., 2009).

An increasing number of marketing messages sent to visitors through traditional and digital means of promotion result in the fact that users cannot select among a huge number of advertisements and messages that surround them every day. For this reason, the consumer is inclined to respect the recommendations of friends (word of mouth) or recommendations through social media (word of mouse). Authors Munz and Sergiunaite (2012), Salzman et al., (2004), define the transfer of information between users through social networks as the exchange of information in a spontaneous and frequent manner. According to Steffes and Burger (2009), there is an exchange of information between the user and spa services both through traditional "WOM" and on-line "WOM", which takes place on the Internet.

The correct choice between traditional and digital marketing communications and content is determined by the message that is being marketed, a budget that has a frequency of planned actions (campaigns or individual stocks), the type of product being offered, product lifecycle and destinations, the characteristics of the target segment. Successful management of promotional activities implies the process of carefully analyzing the spa destination opportunities, the objectives to be achieved by a communication action, and making decisions that are complex and require a detailed analysis of the current situation. The final outcome of the process is the decision-making that represents a specific solution to the problem. Marketing plan and plan of communication activities consist of a series of actions that must be carefully planned, organized and implemented to get the message out to potential tourists in order to produce the desired effect.

Decisions about promotional mix, instruments, and tools that will be used to communicate with the target market, always involve a lot of information and interaction between the destination management and

potential tourists. The dynamism of the process is huge because it concerns decision making and choices at every stage of the process. If spa destinations want to become recognizable in the world of the tourist market, its promotional activity via social networks should be planned strategically, and the measures controlled and corrected. It is necessary to manage online marketing activities, as well as the integration with offline promotional activities (Jovanović & Jovanović Tončev, 2015).

### **The conceptual model**

Investigation of the influence of traditional and digital communications to the decision-making process of visiting the spa destination was conducted in the period from 07/01/2016 to 17/08/2016. The data was collected by personal interviews and sending the questionnaire to the email address of visitors to spa resorts, as well as potential beneficiaries of the tourist sites. The questionnaire, completed by the respondents, comprised 3 parts.

In the first part, the respondents provided basic demographic data: gender, age, the level of education. In the second part, respondents were asked questions about visited spa destinations in Serbia and the region.

The third part was devoted to answering the questions about how the individual resources of traditional and digital communications influenced making a decision to visit a destination. The respondents were offered answers in the form of Likert intensity scale from 1 (not affected) to 5 (very much affected), in order to measure the degree of influence of individual means when deciding to visit a destination. By applying the *Spearman's* correlation coefficient, as well as checking the results by *Mann-Whitney* and *Kruskal-Wallis* test, the authors have tried to establish the relationship between demographic characteristics of respondents and income structures and motifs for going to a spa destination, and analyzed the impact of means of communication in the decision-making process.

The influence of gender, age and educational structure were analyzed respectively in order to determine the purpose and motives for travel destination (health resort or wellness), and the ratio of the aforementioned demographic and income factors and the impact of certain means of communication. By using these tests, the answer to the question of whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the observed variables was sought. The starting basic hypothesis was:

**H0: Instead of choosing between traditional and digital marketing communication, the optimal solution is their combination in order to contribute to making a decision on the visit to a spa tourist destinations.**

It will be operationalized through three specific (X1, X2 and X3), which will be proven by the individual (X1a, X1b, X1c, X1d, X1e, X2a, X2b, X2c)

**H1: Traditional communications contribute to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.**

H1 (a): Advertising on television contributes to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.

H1(b): Advertising on radio contributes to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.

H1(c): Advertising through newspapers contributes to making a decision on visit to spa destinations.

H1(d): Advertising through magazine contributes to making a decision on visit to spa destinations.

H1(e): *Word of mouth* marketing or recommendations of friends or doctors contribute to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.

**H2: Digital communications contribute to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations**

H2(a): Promoting destinations via website contributes to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.

H2(b): Promoting destinations via banners contributes to making a decision on the visit to spa destinations.

H2(c): The combination of advertising through social networks *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Pinterest* contributes to the recognition of marketing destinations and decision-making on the visit to spa destinations.

**H3: Digital communication affects traditional communication in the process of decision-making of Serbian visitors to spa resorts.**

*The research results*

The demographic profile of respondents can be described by the representation of 168 surveyed female respondents and 132 male respondents. The ratio of male and female respondents was tailored to the actual ratio and amounted to 44% of men versus 56% of female respondents. With the analysis of the age structure of the population, it was found that older population dominated with 39.7% of respondents, in other words 119 respondents were 60 years old or older.

Table 1: *Demographic characteristics of the respondents*

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
Gender	Male	132	44	1.56	.497
	Female	168	56		
Age	15-25	15	5.0	3.81	1.183
	26-36	22	7.3		
	36-45	87	29.0		
	46-60	57	19.0		
	60 and more	119	39.7		
Level of education	High school	177	59	1.87	1.166
	College	26	8.7		
	University degree	66	22		
	Master	22	7.3		
	Phd	9	3.0		
Level of income	Up to 150 euros	10	3.3	2.67	.842
	151-300	141	47		
	301-500	86	28.7		
	More than 500 euros	63	21		

Source: *Research results*

The educational structure of respondents varies with the dominant share (59%) of the population that has secondary education. The educational structure is dominated by respondents with secondary education (59%). The least represented are the respondents who have completed master's (7.3%) and Ph.D. (3%) studies. 5% of respondents are young people between 15 and 25 years, with the least visits to spa destinations. The answers to the Likert scale questions that determine how traditional communication influenced the decision on visiting spa destinations were such that 10% of respondents said that TV had not at all influenced the decision on visiting them. Percentage of respondents who answered that the TV influenced a lot and very much amounted to 70% observing these aforementioned variables.

Table 2: *The impact of traditional communications on a decision on the visit destination*

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
TV	Did not influence	30	10.0	3.98	1.394
	Had a little influence	24	8		
	Had a medium influence	42	14		
	Had a medium influence	31	10.3		
	Had a very big influence	173	57.7		
Radio	Did not influence	276	92	1.14	.567
	Had a little influence	15	5		
	Had a medium influence	3	1		
	Had a medium influence	3	1		
	Had a very big influence	3	1		
Newspapers	Did not influence	162	54	1.88	1.163
	Had a little influence	58	19.3		
	Had a medium influence	51	17		
	Had a medium influence	13	4.3		
	Had a very big influence	16	5.3		
Journals	Did not influence	192	64	1.76	1.579
	Had a little influence	45	15		
	Had a medium influence	23	7.7		
	Had a medium influence	22	7.3		
	Had a very big influence	18	6		

Recommendation of friends	Did not influence	60	20.0	3.22	1.525
	Had a little influence	50	16.7		
	Had a medium influence	46	15.3		
	Had a medium influence	52	17.3		
	Had a very big influence	92	30.7		
Recommendation of doctor	Did not influence	167	55.7	2.37	1.579
	Had a little influence	4	1.3		
	Had a medium influence	4	1.3		
	Had a medium influence	102	34		
	Had a very big influence	23	7.7		

Source: *Research results*

Examining the impact of traditional communications, when deciding on visiting the destination, we have found that when the TV is concerned, only 10% of respondents said that the promotion on television very much influenced their choice of a particular destination. A very large percentage (over 50%) of respondents said that TV did not affect their decisions at all. The ratio of respondents who have made a decision based on the impact of radio advertising and responded that this kind of advertising had not had an impact is even more significant. In fact, more than 90% of respondents said that radio was not even relevant when making decisions, while only 1% of respondents declared that the radio had influenced them a lot. The print media, newspapers and magazines, are very much influential to only 5.3%, or 6% of respondents. In order to examine the influence of other means of promoting the adoption of a decision on the visit to a destination, the respondents were given the option to auto-fill empty field. Others, more than 7% of the surveyed responded that a doctor's recommendation had influenced their decision very much, while 20% of respondents thought that the recommendation of friends had a lot of influence. The obtained data testifies to the importance of word of mouth marketing to make a decision about a visit.

Table 3: *The impact of digital communications on the decision about the visit destination*

		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard deviation
Web presentation	Did not influence	203	67.7	1.84	1.337
	Had little influence	16	5.3		
	Had a medium influence	25	8.3		
	Had a medium influence	38	12.7		
	Had a very big influence	18	6		
Banners	Did not influence	250	83.3	1.37	.954
	Had little influence	18	6		
	Had a medium influence	11	3.7		
	Had a medium influence	12	4		
	Had a very big influence	9	3		
Facebook	Did not influence	190	63.3	2.08	1.562
	Had little influence	18	6		
	Had a medium influence	14	4.7		
	Had a medium influence	35	11.7		
	Had a very big influence	43	14.3		
Twitter	Did not influence	270	90	1.23	.788
	Had little influence	10	3.3		
	Had a medium influence	6	2		
	Had a medium influence	8	2.7		
	Had a very big influence	6	2		

Instagram	Did not influence	284	94.7	1.10	.490
	Had little influence	7	2.3		
	Had a medium influence	4	1.3		
	Had a medium influence	4	1.3		
	Had a very big influence	1	0,3		

Source: *Research results*

Examining the impact of the web presentation on the process of making a decision about the visit to a spa resort, we found that 67,7% of respondents answered that web sites did not make an impact on them at all, while 6% of respondents answered that they were very much affected. It is significant to mention the fact that 12% of respondents answered that the contents of the destination presented on the web site influenced decision-making to a great extent.

Communication with potential visitors through banners, Twitter and Instagram is not significant, because over 80% of respondents answered that these social networks have not influenced their decision. The impact of *Facebook* is more significant because more than 14% of respondents said that *Facebook* had a great deal of influence on them. If we consider that the 11% of respondents stated that *Facebook* had much more influence on them, we arrive at the data that 25% of respondents thought that this social network had a lot of influence on the decision-making process. Analysing the data, we concluded that *word of mouth marketing* (*e-word of mouth marketing*) plays an important role in making decisions about a spa visit to a particular destination. To determine the impact and interconnectedness of traditional and digital communications and decisions taken on the visit were used Spearman's correlation coefficient. The data obtained in this analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: *Spearman correlation coefficient traditional and digital communications and decisions taken on the visit to the spa destinations*

The analyzed variables	Spearman coefficient value
TV and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.000
Radio and the decision to visit to the	0.223

spa destination	
Newspapers and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.181
Newspapers and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.005
Word of mouth marketing and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.000
Doctor's recommendations and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.000
Recommendations of friends and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.000
Web presentations and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.000
Banners and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.004
Facebook and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.004
Twitter and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.400
Instagram and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.066
Pinterest and the decision to visit the spa destination	0.005

Source: *Research results*

Values of Spearman's security correlation coefficient between the TV and the decisions made on the visit to spa destination is .000, which is less than 0,005, and we can say that there is a statistically significant correlation between the analyzed variables and that the TV had significantly influenced deciding to visit the destination, and the first individual hypothesis can be **accepted**. Values of Spearman's correlation coefficient between the radio and the decision is greater than 0.05, and we can say that between the observed phenomena there is no statistically significant correlation, and **reject** the hypothesis about the influence of advertising in deciding to visit the spa destination of Serbia. Values of security correlation between the newspaper and the decision to visit a destination are 0,181, which is greater than 0.05, so it can be concluded that the link between the observed phenomenon is not statistically significant and that the hypothesis is **rejected**. The value of Spearman's correlation coefficient between the magazine and the decision is 0.05, so

we can conclude that there is a relatively significant correlation between the analyzed variables, and that hypothesis is **partly accepted**. The value of Spearman's coefficient is less than 0.05, and we can conclude that there is a statistically significant correlation between the observed variables, and that friends' recommendations affect the decision on the visit to the destination, and that the hypothesis can be **accepted**. The same value of Spearman's coefficient relates to doctor's recommendations and decisions on the visit of the place, so it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between doctor's recommendations and decisions on the visit, and this single hypothesis can be **accepted**. Identical Spearman's coefficient values are calculated when determining the correlation of banners and Facebook and their impact on the decision to visit, and these amount to 0.004 which is less than 0,005, but it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between advertising through banners and Facebook and visiting the destination, and this individual hypothesis can be **accepted**. Values of Spearman's correlation coefficient is .066, which is greater than .05, and it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant correlation between the analyzed variables and that the hypothesis is **rejected**.

On the basis of Spearman's correlation test that is applied during the investigation of the two variables whose data is not characterized by a normal distribution, it can be concluded that decisions on the visit to spa destinations correlate statistically to a significant degree with advertising on TV, in magazines, friends' recommendations and doctor's recommendations (as well as traditional means of promotion) and advertising via web presentations, banners, Facebook, Twitter. This leads to the conclusion that both traditional and digital promotional means contribute to decision-making on the visit destination, which confirms the basic hypothesis of the influence of both ways of promoting the process of making a decision on the visit to a spa destination.

Based on Applied nonparametric tests and analysis of the obtained results, it can be concluded that traditional communication still has considerable influence in deciding to visit a spa destination. Whether it is a recommendation of a friend, a doctor or one's own experience, potential visitors of spa destinations are drawn to a specific destination by traditional means of communication. With an adequate choice of promotional mix, a potential visitor gets prompted to act, or search additional information about the destination through the new digital communications. So viewed, it can be concluded that both traditional and

modern communication have a role and influence tourist demand when making decisions on visiting spa destinations.

### **Conclusion**

The social contribution of this work is in pointing out the necessity of introducing new analysis methods and practices in modern and more efficient business destination management by using new forms of communication and the development of promotional mix intended for attracting more tourists. This should not affect significantly the improvement of overall business in the field of spa tourism. Creators of marketing activities in developing countries should understand the advantages of traditional communications in targeting specific target groups, but also the opportunities that modern, digital communications give in attracting the younger age population of developing countries who are expecting an integrated product that can meet their individual demand. Future research of traditional and digital communications should investigate the contribution of different forms of communication, promotion, and creation of a positive image of spa destinations.

The research results show a significant influence of TV, friends' and doctors' recommendations, but also *Facebook*, *Twitter* and web presentations. Values of *Spearman's* correlation coefficient when investigating the impact of TV on the 0.005, then the value of the Spearman's coefficient when it examined the impact of friends' and doctors' recommendations and the decisions taken on the visit to a spa destination from security 0.000, shows a statistically significant relationship, then the values of security from 0.040 to explain the impact of Twitter and from 0.004 showing the correlation between messages sent via Facebook and decisions taken on the visit to a spa.

The study aimed to investigate the effect and significance of traditional and digital means of communication on the decision to visit a destination, as well as to show that the funds have a greater impact on tourists when deciding to undertake the journey. As a result of the age structure of visitors, we came to the conclusion that TV, friends' and doctors' recommendations have a more significant effect on the decision to visit a spa resort than a digital means of communication. During the formulation of spa products intended for this age, it is necessary to adopt a promotional plan upon which the spa destinations rest and promote their products via traditional means of promotion.

However, if the spas in developing countries want to follow the examples of good practice and develop their product by accepting the standard of wellness and wellbeing, it is necessary to formulate a spa product designed for the target market which is the largest user of these services. Modern development of tourism is characterized by changes in the behavior of tourism demand (Podovac, 2017). Visitors of spa destinations are no longer older and sick people, but the younger and business people who want relaxation, active holiday and are eager to relax and escape from everyday life (Jovanović Tončev & Podovac, 2016). A middle-aged visitors and income structure is in question here. These are tourists who start their journeys by searching information on the Internet. Therefore, the destination management should communicate with their potential visitors through digital means of communication. Research has shown that when it comes to Serbia, it should be through Facebook, Twitter and web presentations. Examination of the interrelationship between Pinterest and Instagram and the decision to visit the destination has shown that there is no statistically significant relationship.

Depending on the criteria of selection of traditional and digital communication, destination management and marketing activities creators of spa destinations in developing countries should form the promotional mix in a way that it comprises both traditional and digital communications, because only in this way will they be able to act quickly, efficiently, achieve targeting potential visitors, satisfy their needs with the realization of social responsibility and establish a long-term relationships with tourists, and fight for their loyalty.

Through the analyzed data it can be concluded that the basic hypothesis that opens this paper, which is that instead of choosing between traditional and digital marketing communications, the optimal solution is a combination which contributes to making a decision on the visit to spa tourist destinations, was also confirmed. Furthermore, depending on the criteria of selection of traditional and digital communication, the destination management and creators of marketing activities of spa destinations in developing countries should form the promotional mix in a way that it combines both traditional and digital communications, because only in this way will they be able to act quickly, efficiently, achieve targeting potential visitors, satisfy their needs with the realization of social responsibility and establish a long-term relationships with tourists, and fight for their loyalty.

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