

ADAPTATION TO TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS OF TOURISM ACTIVITY UNDER CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY

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Abstract: *Tourism activity at both the global and national levels must adapt as efficiently as possible to sudden and intensive changes in the environment in which it operates. Economic entities within the tourism industry should increasingly recognize the importance of modern trends in their business activities. This is becoming increasingly necessary under conditions of uncertainty, as competition becomes more intense, and it also represents a way to achieve competitive advantage in specific destinations. The main reasons that should be considered in adapting to new environmental trends among tourism enterprises include: (1) adaptation to the "new traveler" – demands for hyper-personalization; (2) sustainability as a standard rather than an option – innovations in "green" technologies; (3) digital transformation and efficiency: (a) contactless technologies and (b) augmented reality; (4) destination competitiveness – economic prosperity of local communities; (5) safety and predictability – Big Data analytics. Adaptation in tourism is no longer just a matter of "following trends," but of building a resilient system capable of responding quickly to change. For successful adaptation to future conditions, the focus should be placed on three levels of action: (1) technological adaptation (efficiency – using technology for prediction and personalization); (2) operational flexibility (security) – financial flexibility; (3) emotional and value-based connection (loyalty). Modern travelers no longer seek only a destination, but experiences aligned with their personal values and identity.*

Key words: *trends; adaptation; innovation; tourism industry; uncertainty.*

JEL classification: D81, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

In the business conditions of business entities in tourism, they go through a phase of inevitable and radical adaptation with a lot of uncertainty. The main factors in this process of adaptability are: hyper-personalization, adaptation to the "new" traveler, the role of artificial intelligence and the sustainability of the required level of business standards (innovations in "green" innovations); Adapting to sudden changes requires agility as a combination of responsiveness and flexibility. Agility can be achieved precisely through supply chain management, where ICT plays a key role in connecting supply chain participants in order to exchange information in real time and joint activities in the domain of forecasting, planning and logistics. The adaptation of business entities in tourism to sudden and comprehensive changes in the environment in which they exist refers to the applicability of three levels of strategic and operational action:

- 1) technological adaptation related to business efficiency, which means that modern technology (information and telecommunications) is used for forecasting business and personalizing guests in tourism;
- 2) operational security (security) - in conditions of uncertainty, flexibility is a currency that includes three basic modalities in financial transactions.
- 3) From the aspect of direct contact - emotional and value connection - loyalty.
- 4) "Risk Management" strategy, adaptability to the operational level.

The necessity of adapting tourist organizations to modern trends is an area of interest for numerous

domestic and foreign experts, who are engaged in the treatment of this issue and who consider three basic innovative changes in the tourist market: analysis of digital transformation, change in the behavior of consumers (potential tourists) and innovative business models.

2. MODERN TRENDS IN THE MOTIVES (EXPECTATIONS) OF TOURISTS

The business adaptation strategy looks very objectively at the changes in the expectations of tourists, and modern trends as well as numerous innovations applied by business entities in tourism have a crucial effect on their successful business and must be adapted to them. The basic trends that demand their immediate adaptability are the following (Boškov, 2021):

1) A higher level of relaxing intensive vacation - most tourists expect to be guaranteed a profitable and fully content-designed time spent on vacation (the idea is "effort for the sake of vacation", visits with several events, celebrations and active vacations are combined), a vacation that relaxes the guest.

2) Experience and try something new - in the last few years, research shows that many tourists plan to explore new destinations, go on vacation to countries they have never been to before;

3) The need to adapt to the life of the local population, a manner that "got under the skin" of many tourists, looking for more authentic experiences on vacation, and many companies offer them the opportunity to enjoy hidden gems in parallel with traditional tourist attractions and authentic experiences;

4) Significant increase in visits to locations of the most significant segments of movable (museums, libraries, archives, galleries), immovable (archaeological sites, urban cores, protected spatial cultural-historical units, monuments of folk architecture, fortifications, battlefields, execution sites) and intangible (slava, Đurđevdan; Open-Air Museum "Staro selo - Sirogojno") cultural heritage;

5) Substantial increase in group visits to significant celebrations and events - increase in the number of group visits to places of significant celebrations and events (increase in group and family visits to significant cultural institutions and monuments, military memorials and places of suffering, as well as to areas of significant events. Groups of tourists increasingly choose places of celebration of significant events from the world wars, areas of significant battles, areas known for traditional weddings, vintages and harvests, trips with families to places that renew memories of events from attractive places from childhood and youth;

6) More frequent city short visits - they have overtaken, in terms of demand, beach holidays as the most popular type of holiday - probably the result of the increase in low-cost flights to different destinations, and this type of holiday is more attractive to a wide range of people, with the most popular destinations being Amsterdam, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Barcelona and Dublin;

7) Intensification of new approaches: fitness and sports - according to research According to the Association of British Travel Agencies (ABTA) (UK), 6% of people plan a sports holiday and 5% go on an adventure or other challenging holiday, also 4% of people plan to travel abroad to attend major sporting events. This trend that includes fitness and other sports activities and events will have a significant increase among people, mostly middle-aged;

8) Wellness vacations - wellness and spa vacations also have a growing trend that continues. Wellness vacations include a wide range of activities: spa, yoga, detox, fitness and stress relief. They are especially popular with business people looking to fully recover on vacation (especially individual travelers). Destinations with natural beauty regardless of distance are valued, such as Oman, Arizona, Costa Rica and Indonesia;

9) Gastronomic tourism - a growing phenomenon, because more than a third of tourist consumption is spent on food, according to the report of the World Tourism Organization (Gheorge et.al., 2023). Over 22% of Europeans, according to EUROSTAT data, declare that the main reason for going on vacation is a cultural experience, which includes cooking (Barleanu, 2013). Therefore, home cooking is an important factor in the quality of vacation. One of the most commonly used definitions of gastronomic tourism: gastronomic tourism "is travel to regions rich in gastronomic resources, which can generate relaxing experiences or have the purpose of entertainment, which include visits to primary or secondary producers of gastronomic products, gastronomic festivals, fairs, events with demonstration of food preparation and tasting or any activity related to food" (Alibabic, V. et al., 2012);

10) Tourism and technologies - broadband internet has already changed the communication and electronic culture and directly affects the way of (self)organizing annual vacations. Mobile phones are becoming personal means of travel organization, artificial intelligence software will play the role of personal virtual tour operators. However, precisely because of the ever-present technologies and telecommunication networks, it has emerged as a rapidly growing trend (for which there should be a domestic offer) - guests on

vacation are increasingly looking for detoxification from online communication.

According to data (WTO, 2025), tourism trends and movements were influenced by three main groups of factors: unusually large exchange rate fluctuations (currency wars), rising oil prices and increasing global concerns about safety and security. Bearing in mind the latest events related to wars and tensions and a large number of terrorist attacks in the world, it is certain that this last factor will affect the trend of tourist demand in the coming period as well.

3. CUSTOMIZATION LEVELS

All business entities that strive to raise the level of competitiveness or maintain their position in the turbulent tourist market should adapt as quickly as possible to business conditions and an unpredictable environment. The first level of adjustment refers to the application of modern information and communication technologies, which in practice means:

- 1) Implementation of AI tools - use artificial intelligence to analyze data on guest behavior, which means the ability to predict periods of low demand and automatically adjust prices. At the same time, it is also possible to create a "last minute" offer for specific audience segments;
- 2) Automation of the routine - introduction of digital check-in and smart systems in hotel rooms. This frees up a large number of staff who dedicate themselves more to the guest, providing them with greater attention, which is increasingly becoming a luxury in a digitized environment and business model;
- 3) Virtual trials - before the guest books accommodation, he should be given a VR or AR experience of the destination, because in this way uncertainty is reduced and trust is built in relation to the guests in the destination. The second level of adjustment refers to operational flexibility, that is,

security in business. In conditions of uncertainty, flexibility is a currency, which includes three basic modalities:

- adjustment of the cancellation policy - in the following years, travelers choose those that offer refunds or easy rescheduling without penalty. (this directly reduces the stress of the buyer of tourist and hotel arrangements).
- diversification of the offer: it is not necessary to rely only on one type of guests (eg only foreign tourists), it is necessary to develop packages for the local market or digital nomads who stay longer at a specific destination.
- modular packages: it is necessary to allow the guest to "assemble" his vacation (e.g. only breakfast + workspace + yoga class), instead of rigid half-board solutions.

The third level of adaptation represents emotional and value connection - loyalty.

The modern traveler is looking for a purpose, and therefore if the offer matches his values, he becomes a loyal client, while keeping in mind three strategic directions that should be operationalized:

- radical transparency of sustainability - it is not enough to state that the direction is "eco-friendly", it is necessary to show concrete data: local origin of food, reduction of waste or support for local artisans.
- Focus on "Wellness" and mental health - adapting spaces for working in silence, and offering digital detox (rooms without Wi-Fi signal on request) and activities that reduce stress.
- Local authenticity - instead of generic luxury, offer "micro-experiences" - dinner with a local host, workshops of traditional crafts or tours that do not lead to "Instagram", but to real, hidden places.

Table 1. Transformation guide

Traditional Approach	Adaptive Approach for the Coming Years
Mass tourism and fixed packages	Hyper-personalization (offer tailored to the individual)
Focus on price as the main advantage	Focus on value and experience
Reactive problem solving	Proactive prediction using AI analytics
Standard room	"Smart& Healthy" room (air, sleep control)

Source: authors

Taking advantage of opportunities and minimizing the negative impact of changes on business is a serious challenge for the management of companies in the tourism and hotel industry. Concepts such as inclusive tourism, corporate

social responsibility, agility, resilience, dynamic ability, total quality, risk management and digital marketing are gaining importance (Milovanović, Mandarić, 2022). Numerous authors (e.g. Dimitrios Buhalis) focus on concepts such as

resilience, crisis management and strategic agility in order to adapt their business to the turbulent state of the tourism market, which is affected by the general financial, energy and economic crisis.

4. BUSINESS OF TOURIST ENTERPRISES IN THE TURBULENT MARKET

In 2026, and it is predicted that the "turbulent market" will no longer be an incident, but a standard state. Successful tourism businesses (hotels, agencies, tour operators) survive thanks to agility and the ability to turn data into quick decisions. Some of the key strategies for doing business in such an environment are:

1) Dynamic price management (Revenue Management)

In conditions of high inflation or sudden changes in demand, fixed price lists are a thing of the past. Businesses use AI tools like Duetto or Ideas that analyze the market in real time and adjust prices every hour, maximizing profit (RevPAR) even at low occupancy.

2) Diversification of sales channels

Dependence on one channel (eg only Booking.com) in turbulent times is risky.

- Direct bookings: Focus on own sites with loyalty programs based on blockchain technology.
- Niche platforms: Presence on specialized sites for eco-tourism or digital nomads (like Airbnb Categories).

3) Operational flexibility and "Lean" model

Businesses reduce fixed costs through:

- Outsourcing: Hiring specialized agencies for marketing or maintenance only during the season.
- Multi-functional teams: Training employees to cover multiple positions (eg reception and concierge in one), which is crucial when there is a shortage of manpower.

4) Reputation and trust management

In crisis situations (geopolitical tensions, environmental incidents), trust is the most valuable currency.

- Transparency: Clear cancellation and refund rules (so-called "Flex-booking").
- Crisis PR: Fast and direct communication through social networks, following the recommendations of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

5) Technological resistance (Cyber Security)

Digitization brings the risk of cyber attacks. Businesses in 2026 are investing significant resources in protecting guest data, as one security breach can permanently destroy a brand in a turbulent market. For example, special software for crisis management is applied, and above all, the development of an operational strategy for retaining employees in the conditions of the functioning of the turbulent not only tourist neo and global market.

5. ADJUSTING THE BUSINESS OF THE TOURIST AGENCY TO CONDITIONS OF UNCERTAINTY

Modern tourism trends, for the most part, follow and depend on the economic situation and economic opportunities in both the real and financial sectors. Uncertainty is the environment in which all business entities operate in the tourism market, and this is caused by three types of reasons: a comprehensive global crisis, numerous economic fluctuations, and rapid and sudden technological changes. Adaptation of the travel agency to these conditions requires a transition from reactive to proactive and flexible strategic management.

The business of all tourist business entities in the coming years, it is predicted, will take place in conditions of uncertainty and turbulence on the tourist market. A possible adequate response to the newly created circumstances will be the application of innovations in business, which will keep them on the market and thus increase their competitive position. A number of experts in the tourism market predict that travel agencies will have to move from "package sellers" to "architects of trust and experience". Classic travel agencies are experiencing a further transformation and are going beyond the role of "arrangement seller" to the role of "architect of trust and experience". In the new conditions of uncertainty, customers are looking for an agency that saves them time, reduces cognitive load and offers security that internet platforms often cannot guarantee.

It is possible to apply four concrete strategies (Boškov, 2021).

Implementation of AI assistants for hyper-personalization because artificial intelligence is no longer offered as an option, but as a standard for efficiency, namely:

1) AI Itinerary – it is possible, currently, to create itineraries based on vague guest queries (eg "I want peace, nature and workspace for the next week"). and

2) Introduce systems that automatically monitor changes in flights or attraction opening hours and proactively offer solutions to the client before he

himself notices a problem. Introduction of AI Software System +2

Focus on "Kulkations" and "Quiet Escapes" - adjusted sales portfolio to the psychological and climatic needs of travelers.

Coolcations: Due to the summer heat, promote destinations with a more pleasant climate (Slovenia, Scandinavia, mountain centers of Serbia) as primary summer vacations.

Silent Travel: Create packages that guarantee a digital detox, a stay in facilities with high sound insulation or a retreat in nature without mass tourism.

3) Transformation into a "Hybrid model" of business - combine the speed of digital tools with human empathy. A unique digital system: manage the entire agency through smart systems (ERP/CRM) that integrate administration, CIS login and communication with guests in one place. The human factor as a premium service: while AI handles logistics, your agents should focus on solving complex emotional situations and providing insider, "off-the-beaten-path" advice.

4) "Risk Management" strategy: In uncertain times, you are selling security, not just a ticket - adaptable management in economic subjects of tourism activities, efficiently and effectively, implement two operational strategies, especially in conditions of uncertainty in the market as a consequence of an unsafe environment.

Flexible "Add-ons": Offer packages with included "any-reason" cancellation insurance and 24/7 support via WhatsApp/Viber channels.

Storytelling marketing: Instead of generic beach pictures, use content created by real travelers (UGC) and micro-influencers to build authentic trust.

For decades, travel agencies relied on telephones, catalogs and personal contact. For decades, travel agencies have relied on telephones, catalogs and personal contacts. However, in 2026, tourism business increasingly relies on unique digital platforms that integrate all processes — from reservations and customer communication, to marketing and financial tracking.

The development of technology has facilitated the promotion and placement of tourist and hospitality offers, enabling increasingly demanding tourists to access information and compare different offers (Milanović, Mandarić, 2022).

What once required a team of people and hours of work can now be done through one smart system. Artificial intelligence, automation and cloud

technologies allow the travel agency to function efficiently, transparently and with lower costs.

Adaptation of travel agencies to new circumstances includes the following activities:

1) Centralization of business: everything in one place - modern platforms for tourism offer the possibility to combine all processes:

- Flight and hotel reservations in real time,
- CRM systems for monitoring clients and their preferences,
- automated marketing through social networks and email campaigns and
- financial management with integrated invoicing and cost tracking.

This way, the agency doesn't have to use ten different tools — all in one ecosystem.

2) Introducing elements of artificial intelligence as a new agent

In the new opportunities on the tourism market, AI assistants are becoming a key part of the tourism business. They can:

- analyze customer data and propose personalized offers,
- answer inquiries 24/7 via chatbot,
- predict travel trends based on global data and
- optimize prices according to demand and season.

3) Advantages for agencies - the implementation of smart systems brings a number of advantages:

- saving time and resources - less manual work, more automation,
- better communication with clients – faster responses and personalized offers,
- business transparency - all data available in real time and
- scalability – easy business expansion to new destinations and markets.

4) Challenges of digital transformation

Of course, the transition to such systems is not without its challenges:

- implementation costs can be high, especially for smaller agencies,
- employee training is necessary to use the system properly and

- data security becomes a key topic, as it deals with sensitive client information.

That's why it's important for agencies to choose reliable partners and invest in cybersecurity solutions.

A very important global trend in tourist movements, according to data from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is digitization as one of the main drivers of tourism growth in the next decade. Smart platforms are already used in Europe, Asia and America, and are expected to become the standard by 2030 (Barleanu, 2023). On the other hand, travel agencies, which strive to maintain a market position, that is, to survive in the digital age, strive to accept centralized "smart systems". It is considered that it is not just a trend but a necessity (Rihova, 2018). Large companies like Booking.com and Expedia are already using AI systems to personalize offers, while smaller agencies are increasingly investing in cloud solutions to remain competitive (De Felice, 2021). Those agencies, which are actors in the tourism market, which operate in the direction of opportunity will be able to offer better services, reduce costs and attract new clients to whom they offer their services. It is believed that those agencies that remain in the analog world risk losing influence on market events. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that adaptation is not a one-time process, but a continuous need for innovation, because an alternative in the turbulent tourist market often means a loss of position or cessation of business.

From the aspect of operational business of travel agencies, adaptation to the new environment should take place in five most important segments:

1) Flexible strategic planning

Agencies use methods that allow rapid course changes instead of long-term plans, namely: a) planning based on scenarios - developing different action plans for optimistic, realistic and pessimistic market outcomes, and b) applying the "umbrella" strategy - the necessity of defining general guidelines that leave room for operational flexibility depending on the current situation at the specific destination.

2) Digital transformation and technological adaptation

In order to reduce uncertainty and operating costs, technology is a key tool: a) Hybrid business model: combining traditional sales with online platforms in order to reduce dependence on the physical presence of customers. b) Use of Big Data analytics: collecting and analyzing data on passenger behavior enables more accurate demand forecasting even in unstable conditions. c)

Automation of communication: using advanced CRM systems to maintain constant contact with clients, providing timely information on safety and travel conditions.

3) Diversification of the offer and new markets

In turbulent business, reducing and neutralizing risks is achieved by expanding the portfolio: a) new destinations and niches are introduced - focusing on specific markets (eg eco-tourism, rural tourism) which are often more resistant to global upheavals than mass tourism. b) specialization (DMK model) - transformation of reception agencies into destination management companies (DMK) that take full control over the quality and coordination of all services at the local level.

4) Financial and contractual flexibility

Adaptation in conditions of uncertainty represents financial stability that depends on cancellation and payment conditions: a) flexible cancellation conditions - an arrangement with the possibility of changing the date or refund, which instills security in untrustworthy clients. b) liquidity management - use of bank guarantees and deposits as protection against insolvency of partners in the value chain (hotels, carriers).

5) Focus on human resources and creativity

Adaptability in times of crisis is a key advantage of employees who possess: a) new competencies - training employees to work in a digital environment and manage crisis situations. a) innovation - developing creative solutions such as micro-influencer campaigns or personalized "storytelling" content that keeps passengers interested.

CONCLUSION

All the positive changes from the aspect of adaptability and flexibility of business entities in tourism indicate that the modern tourist is no longer a passive observer, but an active creator of his own trip that strives for quality, safety and a meaningful experience. In the conditions of business uncertainty, the basic strategy for the survival of travel agencies is to adapt to the new circumstances in the age of digitalization and a lot of changed habits of travelers, not only in the choice of the desired destination. Adaptability of agencies takes place in three directions:

- 1) implementation of sustainable practices,
- 2) personalization of services and
- 3) integral digital transformation;

Overall adaptation to trends and innovations in the tourism industry, in conditions of uncertainty, refers to three basic actors who play a role in the

tourism market, namely: a) owners of tourism businesses are considering investing in AI systems; b) travelers, potential tourists, expect personalized offers and faster service; c) all leaders in the tourism industry should prepare for global competition, which is largely based on the use of modern information and communication technologies.

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