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FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT
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Veljko Marinković

Sveska 2 Volumen 57 Godište 2026 naučnog časopisa Marketing sadrži, pored Uvodnika, četiri originalna rada i jedan pregledni rad. Teme radova se odnose na analizu uticaja ekonomije noćnog života na imidž destinacije, potrošački etnocentrizam u kontekstu izbora turističkih destinacija, razmatranje sinergetskih efekata tradicionalnih i savremenih medija direktnog marketinga, kao i uticaja karakteristika influensera na stavove i namere u pogledu izbora brenda. Na kraju broja 2 časopisa Marketing razmatra se primena SERVQUAL modela u visokom obrazovanju.

Igor Kovačević i Branislava Hristov Stančić u svom radu jasno ističu da noćni život, kao osnova društvenog i ličnog razvoja, pruža značajan podsticaj razvoju kreativnih industrija u lokalnoj zajednici. Noćni život takođe ima snažan ekonomski uticaj na imidž turističke destinacije. Zbog toga se prilikom formulisanja strategije razvoja destinacije moraju ozbiljno uzeti u obzir svi relevantni aspekti noćnog života koji ona nudi. Ovaj neobičan i veoma interesantan rad predstavlja snažnu teorijsku osnovu za buduća empirijska istraživanja ključnih faktora uspeha destinacije, posmatrano iz perspektive noćnog života. Studija koju su sprovedi **Stefan Zdravković, Dragana Gašević i Božidar Čakajac** nadovezuje se na prethodno opisan rad, budući da se u njoj govori o uticaju konzervativizma, tradicije i izbegavanja neizvesnosti na izbor domaćih turističkih destinacija. Istraživački uzorak činili su ispitanici iz Srbije, Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine. Primenom modeliranja strukturalnih jednačina autori su predložili i testirali novi model izbora domaće turističke destinacije u kojem je naročito potencirana moderatorska uloga turističkog etnocentrizma.

U studiji koju su sprovedi **Dragana Tomašević, Marija Vranješ, Đorđe Alavuk i Stefan Tomašević** analizirani su sinergetski efekti tradicionalnih i digitalnih medija direktnog marketinga na nameru kupovine brendiranih proizvoda. Autori su uzeli u razmatranje 4 moderna medija (veb-sajt, imejl marketing, mobilni marketing i društvene medije) i 3 tradicionalna medija (televiziju, radio i štampane medije). U tom kontekstu, istraživački okvir je obuhvatio 12 modela u kojima su testirani glavni i interakcijski efekti. Nešto drugačiji pogled na temu marketinga putem društvenih medija daju **Anđela Petrović i Ana Urošević**. U njihovoj studiji testirani su efekti različitih karakteristika influensera na stavove i namere kupovine brenda. Poseban fokus rada je na analizi posredničke uloge stava u odnosu atraktivnosti influensera i namere kupovine brenda od strane pratilaca.

Na kraju broja 2 časopisa Marketing, predstavljen je rad koji u fokusu ima merenje kvaliteta usluga primenom SERVQUAL modela. Autori rada **Vesna Rodić Lukić, Nemanja Lukić, Mladen Subotić, Mia Marić i Nataša Branković** testirali su uticaje 5 dimenzija kvaliteta usluge na satisfakciju studenata. Pri tome, u radu su primenjene tri višestruke regresione analize koje su omogućile sagledavanje odnosa očekivanja, percipiranih performansi i gep skora s jedne strane, i satisfakcije studenata s druge strane. Autori rada naglašavaju trajnu relevantnost SERVQUAL modela u proceni kvaliteta usluga visokog obrazovanja.

Koristim priliku da se i ovoga puta zahvalim svim autorima i recenzentima radova na podršci koju kontinuirano pružaju tradiciji i razvoju časopisa Marketing.

Glavni i odgovorni urednik
Veljko Marinković

Theoretical framework of nightlife economy and practical implications for stakeholders and destination development

Igor Kovačević, Branislava Hristov Stančić

Abstract: Paper examines theoretical aspects of the nightlife economy, and the complex nature of the impact that nightlife creates on the destination economy and image, as well as on the stakeholder's management, including local residents. Although COVID-19 significantly slowed the nightlife industry, the economic effects, including GDP, GVA and employment, are showing an important economic push for destination development. In order for the destination to fully implement the nightlife economy, the paper researches management aspects of intangible experience and explains customer behaviour, and the change in lifestyle patterns and leisure time. Analysis of academic and professional resources shows that proper management of destination development understands implementation of various policies and cross-sector cooperation, and therefore paper analyses stakeholders in the nightlife economy, providing insights to the roles and responsibilities. In the final part, authors are providing discussion on the critical success factors from the perspective of nightlife as a destination development catalyst.

Keywords: *nightlife, nightlife economy, experience, urban development*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Entertainment industry represents the most vibrant global industry, that is characterised by complexity mix of various sub-sectors of creative economy, including audio-visual sector (usually referred to as film industry), music industry, nightlife industry, performing arts industry and many others. Entertainment industry is an important and essential part of social-driven activities globally and of destinations development projects, in both urban and tourism related aspects. As that, it creates significant economic effect through various direct and indirect activities and is focused on various marketing segments. Nightlife industry is strong backbone of various destinations and cities, when it comes to the economy, but also from the branding and marketing aspects. Large number of global and local corporations, in the field of hospitality industry and beverage and food production, are looking at nightlife as the core market segment. Paper focuses on analysis and definition of the nightlife economy, its concept, market framework and practical development management policies.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE “NIGHTLIFE ECONOMY” TERM AND FRAMEWORK

Nightlife is often associated with the “realm of play, of socialization, of encounter and of evasion associated with the night-time” (Lovatt & O`Connor, 1995, p.130). Studies have confirmed that the nightlife economy, besides obvious economic impact on the local economy and up to 20% of cities employment (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021), generates important cultural impacts and creates social networks (Chatterton, 2002). Nightlife economy is also being named as “nocturnal” economy (Nofre, 2021) and “night-time” economy (Seočanac & Dimitrovski, 2022), as well as “the broad ecosystem of businesses operation between the hours of 6pm and

6am” (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021, p.73). Nightlife economy is driven by cities’ leisure and retail offer during the night (Graham & Homel, 2008; Huang & Wang, 2018) and by a social interaction need (Hendrie et al., 2009). The concept of nightlife (24-hour city, no-sleep city) is a result of major lifestyle change (Toubes & Vargas-Sánchez, 2021), that is characterized by flexible work hours, increase need for managing free and leisure time and preferences towards centralized, urban life in downtowns (Ghalehnoee & Tabatabae, 2020). Therefore, nightlife became a leading leisure and cultural choice for young Europeans (Brunn et al., 2021) and students 18-25 years old (Moss et al., 2009), with multiple health and wellbeing benefits (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021). Lifestyle, as most used concept in analysing clients and markets (Marinković et al., 2024), remains the key market differentiation filter for the companies looking at the in the nightlife as their market segment. It is important to note that the nightlife economy will always be “framed by contradictory aspects of economic development, law and order, creativity, and access for all” (Chatterton, 2002, p.25), and tendencies between regulation, deregulation and leisure time (Bannister & Fyfe, 2001). On the other side, nightlife has become a permanent socializing aspect of life, supported by increased economic development through consumption of cultural experiences (Hollands, 1995). Nightlife has been a subject of academic research and in most cases, focus is on a nightclub (an entertainment venue) from the wider social-behavioural and cultural context and management (Cardona & Sánchez-Fernández, 2017; Berrozpe et al., 2017) and its economic impact (Eldridge, 2019; Eldridge & Smith, 2019; Nofre, 2021).

3. NIGHTLIFE EXPERIENCES, CO-CREATION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Lifestyle and social aspects of nightlife are often described through term “club culture” and understands nightlife as a platform for creating youth identity (Thornton, 1995), which has been part of the academic research of market segments, such as “ravers” (Luckman, 2001; Anderson & Kavanaugh, 2007), “pub crawlers” (Tutenges, 2015) and “hipsters” (Hae, 2011). Nightclubs are seen as venues in which final consumers communicate their identity and consume experiences (Rossi & Eisenbrand, 2018) at the same time emitting emotions, becoming more savage and adventure oriented (Tutenges, 2012), seeing that as the

behavioural investment (Calafat et al., 2010) into the universal life satisfaction (Adler & Seligman, 2016).

Consumers of nightlife are active consumers. They participate in experience through various social interactions and active engagement happening inside the entertainment venues, such as nightclubs, and they take position of the co-creator (Mandler, 2016) and co-producer of the space and experience (Demant, 2013). Interactivity within the nightclubs, among other options, can be achieved using following solutions such as audience-centered solutions, DJ/MC centered solutions, and solutions developed for interactions between customers and DJs (Gates et al., 2006). Through this active engagement, nightlife consumers behaviour, through dance and music, takes an important role in supporting throughout all stages of life (Sheppard & Broughton, 2020).

Nightclubs are often referred to as laboratories of social change (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021) and represent venues specifically designed for enjoyment and leisure (Demant, 2013). Intangible nature of the nightclub experiences and services limits the options for standardization and branding, since multi-unit clubs have challenges in delivering uniform customer experience (Skinner et al., 2005). When communicating intangible services and experiences (servicescape), customers try to rely on tangibles associates with experiences and services, to reduce uncertainty in making nightclub choices (Knowles & Howley, 2000). Nightclub experience is a mix-use of various aspects, including tangible (sound, vision, taste, smell) and intangible (memory, anticipation) (Edensor, 2012). In essence, nightclub management cannot have full control of the experience, since customers strongly impact it and are part of it (Tutenges & Bøhling, 2019). Therefore, nightclub servicescape becomes competitive and differentiating factor on the saturated market (Moss et al., 2009). However, since new generations, such as Gen Z, are looking at digital experiences, eWOM and information found online (Leković et al., 2025), nightclubs are facing challenged of how to promote and market their venue.

4. NIGHTLIFE AS AN URBAN AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT CATALYST

Nightlife is often seen as a catalyst for the revitalization of underdeveloped and distressed areas within a destination (Nofre & Garcia-Ruiz, 2023), and is a concept that is present in both urban and rural areas, and in both developed and developing economies (Song

et al., 2016; Buchakjian, 2015). Night-time economy is a key development factor for destinations and cities, and it supports development of year-round strong economic structures (Ghalehnoee & Tabatabae, 2020), involving interest of companies in the value chain, on one side, and the local community and residents, on the other side (Toubes & Vargas-Sánchez, 2021). Local and national authorities, through various politics, are supporting development of nightlife offers, in order to respond to change in cultural experience consumption and to reshape post-industrial areas (Berkley, 1999; Brown et al., 2000), making them more attractive not just for visitors, but for residents (Hae, 2011; Kolioulis, 2018). Cities that are experiencing post-industrial economic decline and rising unemployment, have introduced extended operating hours and expanded entertainment, leisure and retail offer, in order to stimulate economic growth through nightlife economic activities (Bianchini, 1995).

Commercial aspect of nightlife, measured through economic aspects, is often connected with the urban development and touristification (Hae, 2011; Mattson, 2015). Nightlife is seen as the hospitality industries and destinations development driver (Liu & Fang, 2016) and can be positioned as a main development strategy of post-industrial city districts and forgotten neighbourhoods (Bianchini, 1995; Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995; Hudson, 2006). Major sun and sea tourist destinations, such as Ibiza, have positioned nightlife as the key tourist attraction and “clubbing tourism” as a dominant tourism product (Cardona & Sánchez-Fernández, 2017). Nightlife is among top decision making factors for tourists to choose Spain (Toubes & Vargas-Sánchez, 2021), Ibiza (Berrozpe et al., 2017), as well as traditional city break destinations, such as Belgrade (Todorović & Bakir, 2005), where nightlife is an important part of tourism offer (Vujović et al., 2021), Berlin (Berkley, 1999; Drevenstedt, 2020; Lücke, 2020), London and Manchester (Sellars, 1998). Over 20% of day visits to the UK and 35% of overnight stays in Berlin are generated by tourists dominantly seeking nightlife experience (Sound Diplomacy & Seijas, 2019). Nightlife economy encharging tourism offer in destinations (Zmyslony & Pawlusinski, 2020; Toubes & Vargas-Sánchez, 2021) includes creative industries entities, like art and museum exhibitions, theatre (Rowe & Lynch, 2012), experience economies and performances of live music and arts (Carah et al., 2021), besides traditional value chain stakeholders, such as restaurants and event venues. Commercial and economic impact of nightlife influence its` strong and significant growth in various urban and non-ur-

ban travel destinations (Sönmez et al., 2013), creating the image of vibrant destination (Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995) and of unique tourism opportunity (Jiang & Hong, 2023).

5. NIGHTLIFE ECONOMY STAKEHOLDERS

Nightlife economy is an important driver of the job creation and income creation for national and local economies (Eja & Eneyo, 2018). It has important impact on UK national and cities economies by generating 1.3 million jobs and £66 billion in revenue, while for every £10 spend in the nightlife entertainment venue, additional £17 is spent in the local community (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021; NTIA, 2024). In pre-Covid years, nightlife economy generated 1.64% of UK GDP (NTIA, 2023). It is expected that only London nightlife economy will grow to total of £2 billion pounds annually by 2026 (Sound Diplomacy & Seijas, 2019) with over 140,000 visitor each night only in the city centre (GLA, 2024). Nightlife economy in Atlanta, USA, has generated nearly \$5.1 billion of revenue, directly supported 41,000 jobs, 10,000 indirect jobs, and has generated total economic impact nearly \$8.5 billion in 2024, which is 4.4% of citywide economy, as well \$67 million of annual tax revenue (City of Atlanta, 2025). In the city of Washington DS, nightlife industry directly generates \$5.3 billion in annual revenue, indirectly \$1.2 billion, and \$0.5 billion in induced spending, though 2,437 business entities involved, supported 64,980 jobs in 2019 (MONC, 2020). In Australia in 2024, nightlife economy is generated through 133,680 business entities, accounts directly 1.1 million employees with a total generated revenue of \$188 billion (Edwards & License, 2025).

COVID-19 restrictions, implemented on local, regional, national and global level, through various aspects such as lockdowns, social distancing, vaccination certificates, and many others, have created obvious negative impacts on the nightlife (Christou et al., 2022). “Nocturnal” aspects of everyday life have shown its importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that people, facing the strict free-move barriers, have understood the importance of social, cultural and economic impact of nightlife (Nofre & Garcia-Ruiz, 2023), since local socio-community aspects and local emotional well-being has also been affected (Nofre, 2023). However, due to lack of economic activities in the high hours, reduction of waste, light and absence of noise pollution, have been noted

Table 1: Nightlife economy stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder sub-group	Stakeholders	Activities
Policy owners, management and policy implementation	Licensing bodies	Police, fire safety, health service, security industry, environmental health, social service professionals, city authorities, sanitary inspections, market and tax inspections, waste management	Defining and implementing national regulations and laws
	Local government		Quality and quantity implementation on local level of defined politics and laws
	Police and inspection		Control, restriction, prevention
Business stakeholders	Nightclub operators Nightclub workforce Restaurants	Licensor premises owners, bartenders, security guards, creative industries employees, public transport workers, hospitality employees, late night workers, taxis, food and beverage logistics. Full-service restaurants, limited-service restaurants, fast food and food trucks. Performance venues (i.e. concert halls, arenas), performing art companies (theatres), independent artists and performers, movie theatres	Business goals and profits
	Performing arts venues, promoters and productions		Creative workforce and operations management
	Casinos and live gaming		
	Social clubs and clubs in hotels		
Visitors and tourists	Customers (consumers)	Concert-goers, clubbers, those who eat out, theatre-goers, taxis passengers, night time sports, late night gyms	Identity seekers, creativity, escapism, hedonism, fun
Local community	Residents		Acceptance of gentrification, seek leisure time, balance with quality of life

Source: Chatterton, 2002; Sound Diplomacy & Seijas, 2019, p.7; City of Atlanta, 2025; NTIA, 2023, p.10

as positive effects of pandemic restrictions of nightlife economy on local society (EEA, 2020).

Nightlife economy understands engagement of various categories of stakeholders, both direct and indirect. Nightlife economy influence openings of new venues, businesses and new jobs, with nightclubs operators as the leader of development process (Jones et al., 2003). Nightlife entertainment venues, usually referred to as clubs, create direct and indirect economic effects and revenues (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021), and the strong competition for the market share among venues in the same part of the city is evident (Pratten, 2003). Studies show that direct business activity of the nightlife entertainment venues reaches relatively low direct revenue (Drevenstedt, 2020; Lukce, 2020), but on the other side indirect effect, through various upstream and downstream value chain stakeholder engagement, creates a significant economic effect, including nightlife entertainment venues such as clubs, pubs, bars, live music venues (APPG, 2021),

gastronomy entities, logistics, music industry and others (Mazierska & Rigg, 2021), especially through local community-based cultural and entrepreneurial stakeholders (Lovatt & O’Connor, 1995). Following tables (Table 1 and Table 2) provides further insights into the systematisation of the nightlife stakeholders.

6. KEY FACTORS FOR DEVELOPING NIGHTLIFE ECONOMY

Indicators for creating a successful urban nightlife economy understand: “variety of economic activities at different levels, diversity of potential events at night, diversity of nightlife activities, existence of identical places, existence of third place, time range uses, plaque flexibility in time, positive mental image, active urban wall, permeation into urban spaces, lighting and the level of monitoring space by organs” (Ghalehnoee & Tabatabae, 2020, p. 2).

Table 2: Nightlife direct stakeholders' categorisation

Category	Key attributes	Sub-category	Key attributes	
Main nightlife premises	<p>Macro nightclubs Venues with significant international prestige, strong influence on destination global image and provide direct visibility towards global market. Structured offer organized by international promoters. Present on international reference lists.</p>	Global club	Large venues, capable to accommodate several thousand visitors. Exists very long on the market. Line up understands A-list performers. Usually managed by global entertainment and hospitality groups. Have the highest global visibility and recognition. Usually implements premium services and premium pricing. Innovator when it comes to the servicescape and experiences. Also recognized for own merch and other branded products.	
		Big club	Large venues, usually managed by local or regional operators. Important but cannot compete with global clubs, when it comes to performers. However, they have international importance and relevance.	
		New club	Large venues, but lower in maximum capacities, in comparison to global and big club. Due to limited space on major locations, operators tend to take over existing big or global club, and through the re-branding to increase market penetration and market share. Often, operators tend to bring the importance of the micro nightclubs to the level of new club on the global map, buy entering new venues and through rebranding.	
	<p>Micro nightclubs Venues with dominant local importance, with small or no impact of destination global visibility, adds value only once the visitors arrived to a destination</p>	Hard club	Smaller venues, managed by local company. Focused on creating own brand on the local market, with occasional international performers. They are positioned as the added value to the macro clubs, and offer great alternative. Focused on the season and days in which global clubs are either not operating or have low flow of visitors.	
		Soft club	Relatively small venues, with no specific and no extraordinary investment in experience, servicescape and experience. Offer is basic and often are focused on locals.	
		Ambient clubs	Small venues, with focus on market niche, offering very narrow experience, when it comes to performers.	
		Afterhours club	Relatively small venues, focusing on delivering basic experience and servicescape in the off time of macro clubs. Line up of artists and performers is not international. Usually dislocated from the central nightlife zone, due to noise restrictions, or are located within underground levels of buildings.	
	Complimentary nightlife premises	<p>Waterfront premises (and beach clubs for sea side destinations) and other nightlife options Venues are focused on the experiences preceding nightclub visit. Music is an important part of their servicescape and experience offered, but it is a added value to the main business, usually restaurant-type business based on food and beverage service.</p>	Luxury club	Premium level of service, premium pricing, strong brand on the international and local market. Often are applying paid access, either on the top of the spending or including minim spending per visitor.
			Classic club	More traditional in offer, with basic or limited offer of food and drinks. Often operators and brands are changing from season to season, from year to year.
Sunset club			Typical for seaside resorts and winter resorts, and offer premium view over the sunset, as the key selling point. Peak visitation is during the sunset hours.	
Lounge			Premises are relatively small. Music is not key experience moment, but rather a part of the atmosphere. Visitors are focused on socialization over the launch and dinner time with friends. There is a vert thin line in comparison to traditional restaurants. Also operates daily.	
Disco pub			Understands typical pub premises, that upgrade the offer and service by providing special performers, usually in the nigh hours.	
Hotel club			Venues located inside the hotels. Typically, are organized on the pool area or on the top of the hotels. Big risk for hotel, due to interaction among hotel guests and walk-in guests.	
Cabaret			Venues that combine restaurant with cabaret inspired experience and performance. Focus is on creating an unforgettable experience from a dinner.	
Party boat	Boat organized excursions, that are limited in duration and offer for the visitors. The cruise on the river or on the sea is the selling point.			

Source: Ramón-Cardona et al. (2022)

Table 3: Nightlife economy developing factors

Key factors	Descriptions
Inevitable inclusion in the city development projects, especially residential and multi-use development	Increase in real estate prices and construction, increased the operational costs and leading to several closures of night time establishments, due to noise complaints. Local policy makers cities should adopt policies that protect established venues by placing responsibility on developers to ensure soundproofing or resident awareness of existing noise conditions, allowing long-standing venues to operate without disruption.
Sustain, support and measure creative industries impacts	Development and implementation of the measurement tool that will clearly showcase, based on data and figures, impact of the creative industries as a part of nighttime economy. Tools should address both quantitative data, such as economic direct and indirect impact, but also qualitative data that relates on the other added values, such branding, cultural diplomacy, creative freedom and similar.
Responsibility in managing nighttime entertainment venues and employees in the nighttime economy	Development of the joint public-private initiative in order to mitigate negative externalities associated with the city's nighttime economy, and to promote responsible operations of entertainment venues. Implementation of code of practice in order to increase security and social benefits for workers in the industry. Introduction of industry professional organizations that will act as a "voice" of industry towards policy makers.
Safe and balance environment for residents and tourist	Policies adopted by the cities should balance tourist inflows with residents' needs by promoting safety, inclusivity, and respectful behavior.
Development and renewal of post-industrial districts and proper city zoning	Nighttime economy as a development driver of underdeveloped neighborhoods, and as a tool for renewing sense of belonging and identity. Proper zoning allows development of other industries as well, including shopping and retail and similar.

Source: Sound Diplomacy & Seijas, (2019); ECSC, 2025

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING NIGHTLIFE AS A DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT CATALYST

Nightlife, as a foundation of social and personal growth, provides an important boost to development of creative industries in the local community, and through total generated revenues has a strong economic impact on destination development. Destinations are trying to re-invent the experience-based products, putting subjective individual feeling and identity, as the leading element of marketing, branding an image creation. In that effort, nightlife experience represents an inevitable factor of overall destination development, as well as the differentiating factor of internal zones (parts of destinations and cities), through which a certain zone image and revenue is being achieved.

In that regard, every nightlife zone of a destination should be part of special destination management principles, that involve various public-private cooperation models among policy makers, policy implementors, direct and indirect business stakeholders. Of course, needs and wants of local community and its residents, should be taken care into the consideration,

in order not to limit local wellbeing. Therefore, destination management organisations need to balance existing tangible resources and intangible experiences among all stakeholders (Kovačević et al., 2020), in process of developing and marketing of destination zones.

Critical success factors from the perspective of nightlife as a destination development catalyst should include following:

- Development of a distinctive economic impact model for the nightlife economy, that will standardise measurement of direct and indirect stakeholder's activities, according to the official nomenclature based on the type of business and service provided. Model should be based on the available data for multiple years, in order to notice trends, including data that is available from the official available statistics offices. If possible, a separate part of the models should understand as the primary research done directly with businesses in the nightlife zone, based on the standardised qualitative and quantity research;
- Urban development strategies of the larger areas, such as cities, tourism destinations, and even re-

gions, should involve nightlife economy as the filter and criteria for future developments. Various models of nightlife development should be integrated, depending of the mix used purpose of the urban zones, desired economic volume, destination image impact and on the wellbeing of the local residents;

- Stakeholder management, including open communication, networking and education, is the vital element of economic and social sustainability of the nightlife zones in the larger urban areas. Process of standardisation of services based on the industry standards, should be implemented as the tool for increasing total quality of provided services, and creates opportunities for additional differentiation from other zones, and providing strategic competitive difference;
- Proper definition and implementation of policies, that are based on the true essence of the nightlife economy, rather than customisation of already existing rules and regulation from other (similar) fields. Policy owners should involve stakeholders in process of defining plans, procedures, special regulation and guides, in order to create supportive business environment.

8. CONCLUSION

All aspects of “nightlife” have been part of numerous academic studies covering various fields, including economics and management, behavior, and urban planning. Literature review clearly showed the complex nature of the nightlife as the economic and social component of individual, market and society life. In the process of planning and monitoring nightlife development, impact and influence, multiple direct and indirect stakeholders should be involved, but always having in mind the local residents. Economic effects are important, as well as marketing spillover effects of nightlife to the destination brand and development. Destinations should balance among various stakeholders, making sure that the implemented policies create positive business and social environment for current and future development.

Paper identifies business environment consisted of numerous categories of stakeholders. For reach-

ing supporting environment for creating sustainable nightlife economy, a destination needs to find balance among goals and aspirations of various stakeholders. No matter if we speak about tourist destination, or an urban zone within larger city, the sustainability of the local community (i.e. local wellbeing, quality of life, noise, pollution, jobs, economic prosperity, housing) remains the most important topic, having in mind that in search for the wider economic effects, might be under the pressure. Interestingly, case studies show that with increased development of nightlife economy, destinations are becoming more and more popular residential areas, experiencing in the same time the change in lifestyle and population behaviour patterns.

Business framework of nightlife economy offer is very diverse, and not just following the changes in the consumers behaviour, but also influence the change. Business owners are changing business models, in terms of combination of tangible and intangible services and experiences, to reach certain market share. With change on the side of business stakeholders, destinations also change in order to position as the nightlife destinations. However, policy owners (i.e. destination developers and destination management organisations, city authorities, local tourism boards) that also manage marketing of destinations, are not in the position to fully control customer experience, customer expectations and image customers have. The reason for this is that in the nightlife economy, the business eco-system is composed of independent business owners, each looking at own business results, and that customers have their subjective feeling and view over the experience and image, which cannot be controlled. In that sense, development of destinations under the umbrella of nightlife economy is not fully controlled and might create unwanted impact of destination developers and destinations managers.

Future research should focus on developing economic impact model of nightlife economy, that in the further research can be adopted and tested to multiple destinations. Special focus should be on researching marketing and branding effect of zones within a destination on the global destination image, and if those is user-generated or controlled by destination managers. Also, future research should include behaviour analyses, in terms of customer experience, attitude research and similar.

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Apstrakt

Teorijski okvir ekonomije noćnog života i praktične implikacije za stakeholdere i razvoj turističke destinacije

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Rad ispituje teorijske aspekte ekonomije noćnog života, složenu prirodu uticaja noćnog života na ekonomiju i imidž destinacije, kao i na upravljanje stakeholderima, uključujući lokalno stanovništvo. Iako je COVID-19 značajno usporio industriju noćnog života, ekonomski efekti, uključujući BDP, GVA i zaposlenost, pokazuju važan ekonomski podsticaj za razvoj destinacije. Da bi destinacija u potpunosti implementirala ekonomiju noćnog života, rad istražuje menadžerske aspekte nematerijalnog iskustva i objašnjava ponašanje potrošača, kao i promene u obrascima stila života i slobodnog vremena. Analiza akademskih i stručnih izvora

pokazuje da pravilno upravljanje razvojem destinacije podrazumeva primenu različitih politika i međusektorsku saradnju, te rad analizira stakeholdere u ekonomiji noćnog života, pružajući uvid u njihove uloge i odgovornosti. U završnom delu, autori daju diskusiju o ključnim faktorima uspeha iz perspektive noćnog života kao katalizatora razvoja destinacije.

Ključne reči: *noćni život, ekonomija noćnog života, iskustvo, urbani razvoj*

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Conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as determinants of domestic tourist destination choice in the Balkans: The moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism

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Abstract: The primary aim of this study is to examine the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance (a Hofstede cultural dimension) on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, while also exploring the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism. Empirical research was conducted in early 2025 on a sample of 977 respondents from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, using a survey method. Data analysis was performed with SmartPLS 4 software. The findings reveal that conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance exert a significant and positive direct impact on the choice of domestic tourist destinations. Furthermore, results indicate that tourist ethnocentrism significantly moderates all examined relationships, further strengthening the links between the independent variables and the preference for domestic destinations. These results highlight the central role of cultural and value dimensions in shaping tourist behavior within the Balkan context. The theoretical contribution of the study lies in the integration of cultural factors and ethnocentrism in analyzing consumer preferences in tourism, while the practical implications provide guidance for designing marketing strategies that foster domestic tourism promotion across the region.

Keywords: *conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, tourist ethnocentrism, domestic tourist destinations, Balkans*

JEL Classification: M31, Z1, Z3

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism represents one of the most dynamic sectors of the contemporary economy; however, the selection of tourist destinations is not determined solely by economic considerations such as price or service quality. Tourist decision-making is often rooted in deeper cultural and value-based orientations that shape individual attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral patterns (Balabanis et al., 2001; Cleveland et al., 2022; Hofstede, 2001; Janković et al., 2022; Riznić et al., 2014; Veljković et al., 2015). Within this context, conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance emerge as salient dimensions influencing how individuals evaluate and select domestic as opposed to foreign tourist destinations.

Conservatism, understood as a value system oriented toward the preservation of established social norms and resistance to change, may predispose individuals to favor domestic tourist destinations, particularly when such choices are associated with loyalty to national culture (Pop et al., 2024). In a similar vein, tradition, conceptualized as an attachment to cultural heritage and long-standing social practices, encourages tourists to seek destinations that reaffirm historical continuity and cultural familiarity (Apak & Gurbuz, 2023; Zdravković & Živković, 2025). Uncertainty avoidance, one of Hofstede's central cultural dimensions, reflects the degree to which individuals prefer predictability, security, and structured environments. Tourists characterized by higher levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to perceive domestic destinations as safer and more culturally familiar, which increases their attractiveness relative to foreign alternatives (Hofstede, 2001; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2024).

Beyond the direct effects of these value- and culture-based factors, this study places particular emphasis on tourist ethnocentrism, defined as the belief that the consumption of domestic tourism services is both preferable and morally justified compared to the selection of foreign destinations (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). Tourist ethnocentrism not only shapes attitudes toward domestic desti-

nations but may also amplify the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance by acting as a moderating mechanism. In this sense, ethnocentrism functions as a socio-cultural lens through which individual values are translated into concrete tourism choices.

The empirical research was conducted in the Balkan context, encompassing Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—a region characterized by pronounced cultural diversity, a strong historical legacy, and deeply embedded value orientations. While previous studies (Cleveland et al., 2022; Cui et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022) have predominantly examined the individual effects of conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, or ethnocentrism on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, this study adopts a holistic approach by simultaneously integrating these factors within a single analytical framework, thereby addressing an important research gap in the existing literature. The research is based on 977 valid survey responses, with data analyzed using the Smart-PLS 4 software package. Although the data were collected across three countries, the analysis treats them as a single cultural cluster, reflecting the shared socio-cultural and historical characteristics of the Balkan region and allowing for an aggregated examination of the determinants of domestic destination choice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives that collectively offer a comprehensive explanation of domestic tourist destination choice. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) underscores the importance of group membership and cultural belonging in shaping individual preferences, which is directly relevant to conservatism and tradition as value orientations that strengthen attachment to the national in-group. In the tourism context, these value orientations may encourage individuals to favor destinations that reflect shared cultural symbols, norms, and identities. In addition, Social conflict theory (Sherif, 1966) provides further insight into how intergroup distinctions and perceived boundaries between “in-groups” and “out-groups” can foster protective attitudes toward domestic consumption. Applied to tourism, such dynamics may intensify ethnocentric tendencies, leading individuals to perceive domestic destinations as more legitimate, desirable, or morally appropriate compared to foreign alternatives.

From a micro-level perspective, Consumer behavior theory, as developed in early integrative models of buyer decision-making (Engel et al., 1968; Howard & Sheth, 1969), explains how individual values, beliefs, and cultural orientations are translated into concrete consumption choices. These foundational frameworks emphasize the cognitive and evaluative processes underlying purchase decisions and provide the theoretical basis for understanding tourism-related preferences. Building upon this tradition, more recent studies (e.g. Pratama, 2025) further highlight the role of internalized value systems in guiding destination choices, particularly in contexts characterized by cultural salience and identity-driven consumption. Complementing these approaches, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, originally developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), provides a process-oriented framework explaining how external environmental stimuli influence internal psychological states, which subsequently shape behavioral responses. According to this foundational perspective, environmental cues (stimuli) affect individuals’ cognitive and affective conditions (organism), ultimately leading to approach or avoidance behaviors (response). Building upon this original framework, recent applications in tourism research (Li et al., 2025) extend the model to cultural and social contexts, suggesting that culturally embedded stimuli—such as uncertainty avoidance—shape internal states including risk perceptions and identity salience, which in turn influence behavioral outcomes. Within this theoretical logic, the preference for domestic tourist destinations can be interpreted as a behavioral response to culturally grounded stimuli processed through individual cognitive and affective mechanisms.

Building on these theoretical lenses, the present study conceptualizes conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as key antecedents of domestic tourist destination choice, while positioning tourist ethnocentrism as a central moderating construct that conditions the strength and direction of these relationships within the context of domestic tourism.

2.1. Conservatism and domestic tourist destination choice

Conservatism is generally understood as a value orientation that emphasizes the preservation of traditional social structures, respect for authority, and resistance to change (Pop et al., 2024; Simpson et al., 2016). Individuals who lean toward conservative attitudes tend to exhibit a stronger sense of national identity and a

higher degree of loyalty toward domestic institutions, social norms, and established practices. Such value orientations influence a wide range of individual decisions, including consumption-related behaviors and preferences in the tourism domain (Shen et al., 2022). In the context of tourism, conservatism may manifest as a pronounced tendency to select domestic tourist destinations that reflect familiar cultural symbols, historical continuity, and socially shared values (Shen et al., 2022; Yousaf, 2025). Domestic destinations provide a culturally predictable environment that aligns with conservative worldviews and reduces exposure to unfamiliar social and cultural settings. By contrast, international travel may be perceived by conservative individuals as relatively riskier, less compatible with their value systems, and less conducive to supporting the domestic economy and local communities. These perceptions collectively contribute to a stronger inclination toward domestic tourism (Yıldız et al., 2023).

Accordingly, it is expected that individuals with stronger conservative orientations will be more likely to prefer domestic tourist destinations over foreign alternatives. On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Conservatism has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.

2.2. Tradition and domestic tourist destination choice

Tradition refers to the preservation and transmission of inherited customs, practices, and beliefs that collectively shape a community's cultural identity and social continuity (Cui et al., 2025). Individuals who place a high value on tradition tend to emphasize stability, historical continuity, and the maintenance of established cultural norms, often perceiving these elements as central to both personal and collective identity. Such value orientations influence a wide range of social behaviors, including preferences related to leisure and tourism consumption (Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024). Within the tourism context, a strong orientation toward tradition is likely to translate into a heightened attachment to domestic tourist destinations that embody cultural rituals, folklore, historical landmarks, and locally rooted practices (Pezeshki et al., 2019). By choosing destinations that reflect national heritage and shared historical narratives, tourists are able not only to fulfill leisure-related needs but also to reaffirm their sense of cultural belonging and collective memory. In contrast, foreign destinations may be perceived

as less capable of providing this symbolic and identity-related reinforcement. As a result, tradition functions as a motivational driver that directs individuals toward domestic rather than international tourism choices (Cui et al., 2025; Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024).

In light of these considerations, it is reasonable to expect that individuals with stronger traditional value orientations will exhibit a greater preference for domestic tourist destinations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Tradition has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.

2.3. Uncertainty avoidance and domestic tourist destination choice

Hofstede's (2001) cultural framework comprises several dimensions, including individualism versus collectivism, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, indulgence versus restraint, and uncertainty avoidance. While each of these dimensions offers valuable insights into how cultural values shape consumer behavior, the present study focuses specifically on uncertainty avoidance due to its pronounced relevance for tourism-related decision-making. This dimension is particularly important in tourism contexts, as destination choice inherently involves perceptions of risk, safety, and predictability. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the extent to which individuals seek to minimize ambiguity, unpredictability, and uncertainty in their social and physical environment (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals characterized by high levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to prefer clear rules, structured situations, and familiar contexts that reduce perceived risks and enhance a sense of control. When applied to tourism behavior, this cultural orientation plays a significant role in shaping destination preferences (Zakaria et al., 2021). Domestic tourist destinations typically offer a higher degree of familiarity, including shared language, known social norms, and culturally embedded practices, which collectively contribute to a stronger perception of safety and predictability (Duong et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2022). In contrast, international travel often entails exposure to unfamiliar cultural settings, different languages, and potentially uncertain logistical or safety conditions, which may be perceived as stressful or undesirable by tourists with high uncertainty avoidance. Consequently, such individuals are more likely to favor domestic destinations, where perceived risks are lower and the overall

travel experience is more controllable and predictable (Hong et al., 2023; Prince et al., 2019). This tendency is particularly relevant in the Balkan context, as Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are generally characterized by relatively high levels of uncertainty avoidance, further underscoring the importance of this cultural dimension for the present analysis (Hofstede Insights, 2025).

Based on these theoretical considerations, uncertainty avoidance is expected to positively influence tourists' preferences for domestic destinations. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Uncertainty avoidance has a positive effect on the choice of domestic tourist destinations.

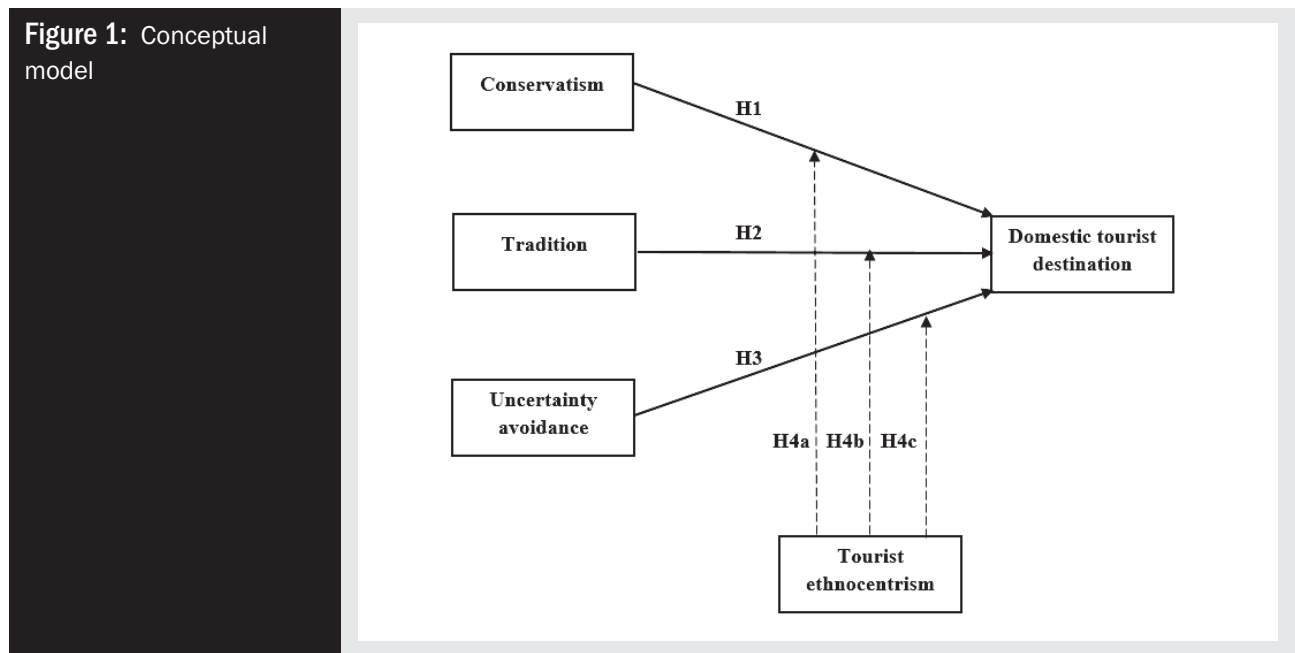
2.4. Tourist ethnocentrism as a moderator

Ethnocentrism originates as a sociological concept, initially defined as the tendency to interpret and evaluate other cultures through the standards and norms of one's own culture, often accompanied by a perceived superiority of the in-group over out-groups. Building on this foundational understanding, subsequent research has introduced several derivative constructs that capture the manifestation of ethnocentrism within specific social and economic domains. One of the most influential among these is consumer ethnocentrism, which emphasizes the economic dimension of ethnocentric orientations and refers to consumers' preference for domestic over foreign products, driven

by loyalty to the national economy and concerns for domestic welfare (Shimp & Sharma, 1987).

Extending this logic to the tourism domain, the concept of tourist ethnocentrism has emerged to describe individuals' moral, cultural, and normative preferences for domestic tourist services and destinations. Tourist ethnocentrism reflects the belief that choosing domestic tourism options is more appropriate and socially responsible than selecting foreign alternatives, particularly in contexts where tourism consumption is perceived as contributing to national economic development. Given its direct relevance to destination choice and travel-related decision-making, the present study adopts tourist ethnocentrism as a central analytical construct (Cleveland et al., 2022; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020).

Tourist ethnocentrism is commonly characterized by the perception that supporting domestic tourism services constitutes not only a personal preference but also a moral obligation, whereas opting for foreign destinations may be viewed as less legitimate or even harmful to the domestic economy (Aguilar-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Ragab et al., 2023). Individuals with higher levels of tourist ethnocentrism tend to evaluate tourism decisions through a strong lens of national loyalty, interpreting domestic travel as an expression of economic and cultural support for their country (Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). Beyond its direct influence on destination preferences, tourist ethnocentrism may also function as a moderating mechanism



Source: Authors

that conditions the strength of relationships between individual value orientations and domestic destination choice. Specifically, ethnocentrism is expected to amplify the effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance by reinforcing value-consistent interpretations of tourism behavior. For instance, tourists who simultaneously exhibit strong conservative orientations and high levels of ethnocentrism are likely to demonstrate a particularly pronounced preference for domestic destinations. Similarly, individuals who value tradition or seek to minimize uncertainty may experience an intensified inclination toward domestic travel when these orientations are coupled with ethnocentric beliefs (Cui et al., 2025; Zakaria et al., 2021).

Tourist ethnocentrism is conceptualized in this study as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationships between conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, and the choice of domestic tourist destinations. Based on this theoretical reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between conservatism and domestic tourist destination choice.

H4b: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between tradition and domestic tourist destination choice.

H4c: Tourist ethnocentrism positively moderates the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and domestic tourist destination choice.

The conceptual model presented in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance as independent variables, domestic tourist destination choice as the dependent variable, and tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating factor.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a quantitative research design to systematically examine the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on the choice of domestic tourist destinations, while explicitly incorporating tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating variable. A quantitative approach was deemed particularly appropriate given the study's objective to test theoretically grounded hypotheses and to estimate

the strength and direction of relationships among multiple latent constructs within a structured analytical framework. The empirical research was conducted at the beginning of 2025 in the Balkan region, encompassing Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering the cross-national scope of the study and the need to ensure adequate representation of respondents from each country, a stratified sampling strategy was applied. Stratified sampling is especially suitable in cross-cultural research, as it allows researchers to control for structural heterogeneity across predefined subpopulations and to enhance the comparability of empirical findings. In this study, the strata were defined by country of residence (Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina), reflecting both administrative boundaries and meaningful socio-cultural groupings within the Balkan context. This approach ensured that each national group was proportionally and systematically included in the sample, thereby reducing potential sampling bias associated with over- or under-representation of specific countries.

Within each national stratum, quota sampling was employed as an additional sampling technique to further improve sample balance and comparability across groups. Quota sampling is particularly useful in large-scale survey research when probability sampling is constrained by practical considerations such as time, access, or population registers. By establishing predefined quotas for each country, the study ensured a relatively even distribution of respondents across the three national groups, which is critical for cross-national and comparative analyses. This methodological choice enhances the internal validity of the study by minimizing distortions that could arise from unequal group sizes and by enabling more reliable aggregation of data across countries when analyzing the Balkan region as a coherent cultural cluster. As a result of this combined stratified–quota sampling approach, data were collected from a total of 977 respondents, including 330 participants from Serbia, 340 from Croatia, and 307 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. This sample size exceeds commonly recommended thresholds for PLS-SEM analysis and provides sufficient statistical power for estimating complex models involving multiple latent constructs and interaction effects. Moreover, the balanced structure of the sample supports the study's conceptual assumption that, despite national differences, Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina share comparable historical, cultural, and value-based characteristics that justify their joint examination within a single regional framework (Balkan).

Table 1: Measurement items, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability for variables

Variables	Statements	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability
Conservatism	1. I prefer maintaining traditional values in my daily life. 2. I tend to follow established norms rather than adopt new trends. 3. Rapid social changes make me feel uncomfortable. 4. I respect conventional practices and customs.	0.929	0.905
Tradition	1. Family customs and rituals are important to me. 2. Preserving cultural heritage is a priority in my life. 3. I value historical continuity in my community. 4. Maintaining national traditions is important in everyday activities.	0.917	0.911
Uncertainty avoidance	1. I feel uncomfortable in ambiguous or unpredictable situations. 2. I prefer structured situations with clear rules. 3. I avoid taking risks whenever possible. 4. I rely on guidelines or instructions to handle new situations.	0.924	0.892
Tourist ethnocentrism	1. I prefer visiting domestic tourist destinations over foreign ones. 2. I feel an obligation to support local tourism. 3. I am skeptical about the quality of foreign tourist offerings. 4. I feel proud when choosing national tourism products.	0.936	0.889
Domestic tourist destination	1. I prefer spending my holidays at domestic tourist destinations. 2. Domestic destinations offer experiences that meet my travel expectations. 3. I feel more comfortable visiting tourist spots within my own country. 4. I would recommend domestic destinations to friends and family.	0.907	0.865

Source: Authors

All constructs were measured using a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The use of a seven-point scale was selected to enhance measurement sensitivity and to capture subtle variations in respondents’ attitudes, perceptions, and value orientations. Each latent variable was operationalized through four reflective indicators adapted from well-established and widely validated measurement scales in the literature (Cleveland et al., 2022; Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Hofstede, 2001; Sabiote-Ortiz et al., 2024; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Zdravković & Gašević, 2022). This ensured both content validity and theoretical consistency with prior empirical research.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software, enabling the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for predictive research, its robustness in handling complex models with moderating effects, and its ability to simultaneously assess the measurement and structural components of the model. This approach is particularly appropriate in tourism and consumer behavior research, where constructs are often abstract and measured indirectly through multiple indicators.

Table 1 presents the full set of measurement items used in the study, along with Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs. These indicators confirm satisfactory internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model, thereby providing a solid foundation for subsequent structural analysis and hypothesis testing.

As presented in Table 1, all constructs demonstrate a high level of internal consistency reliability. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients range from 0.907 to 0.936, while composite reliability (CR) values range between 0.865 and 0.911, all of which exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2006; Nunnally, 1978). These findings indicate that the measurement items used to operationalize conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, tourist ethnocentrism, and domestic tourist destination choice are highly reliable and internally consistent. The strong reliability indicators suggest that the items within each construct consistently reflect the underlying latent variables and that respondents interpreted the measurement statements in a stable and coherent manner. This reduces the potential impact of random measurement error and enhances confidence in the quality of the measurement model. Consequently, the established

level of reliability provides a solid foundation for the application of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and ensures that the subsequent analysis of structural relationships is based on well-measured constructs, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the study's empirical results.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 2 reports the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all research variables, indicating the convergent validity of the measurement constructs.

Table 2: Average variance extracted (AVE) for research variables

Research variables	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Conservatism	0.722
Tradition	0.715
Uncertainty avoidance	0.709
Tourist ethnocentrism	0.756
Domestic tourist destination	0.723

Source: Auhtors

As shown in Table 2, all average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, ranging from 0.709 to 0.756. These results indicate that each construct explains a substantial proportion of the variance in its associated indicators, thereby providing strong support for convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The findings suggest that the measurement items are well aligned with their respective latent constructs and share a high degree of common variance. Consequently, the indicators effectively capture the underlying theoretical concepts, ensuring that the measurement model is robust and suitable for subsequent PLS-SEM structural analysis.

Table 3 presents the model fit indicators for the domestic tourist destination research model, assessing the overall goodness-of-fit of the PLS-SEM model.

As reported in Table 3, all model fit indices meet or exceed the recommended thresholds, providing strong evidence of an adequate overall model fit. The χ^2/df ratio of 1.962 falls well below the commonly accepted upper limit of 3, indicating a satisfactory level of model parsimony and fit between the proposed model and the observed data (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Furthermore, the goodness-of-fit indices—including GFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI—range from 0.911 to 0.953, all surpassing the recommended cutoff value of 0.90, which further confirms the robustness and structural adequacy of the model (Byrne, 1998). In addition, the RMSEA value of 0.017 is substantially lower than the threshold of 0.08, indicating a very low level of approximation error and suggesting an excellent fit of the model to the data (Hair et al., 2006). Taken together, these results demonstrate that the proposed PLS-SEM model exhibits strong empirical support and provides a reliable and valid framework for testing the hypothesized relationships among the constructs.

Table 4 reports the results of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis, examining the direct effects of the independent variables—conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance—on tourists' preference for domestic destinations. The Table 4 presents the estimated path coefficients, statistical significance levels, and explanatory power of the model, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the hypothesized relationships. These results offer empirical evidence on the extent to which value-based orientations and cultural predispositions shape domestic destination choice, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of tourist behavior within the examined context.

As shown in Table 4, all three independent variables have a significant positive impact on domestic tourist destination choice. Conservatism exhibits a path coefficient of 0.356 ($t = 5.369, p < 0.01$), tradition has a coefficient of 0.378 ($t = 5.893, p < 0.01$), and uncertainty avoidance shows the strongest effect with a coefficient of 0.412 ($t = 6.781, p < 0.01$). These results

Table 3: Model fit indicators for the domestic tourist destinations research model

Goodness-of-fit indicators	Domestic tourist destination model	Recommended threshold
χ^2/df	1.962	<3
GFI	0.933	>0.9
IFI	0.941	>0.9
TLI	0.911	>0.9
CFI	0.953	>0.9
RMSEA	0.017	<0.08

Source: Authors

Table 4: PLS-SEM results – impact of independent variables on the domestic tourist destinations

Independent variables	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t statistics	p values
Conservatism	0.356	0.073	5.369	0.000**
Tradition	0.378	0.095	5.893	0.000**
Uncertainty avoidance	0.412	0.064	6.781	0.000**

Notes: Level of statistical significance: **0.01

Source: Authors

Table 5: Moderation effects of tourist ethnocentrism in the PLS-SEM model (dependent variable: domestic tourist destinations)

Relations	Path coefficient	Standard deviation	t statistics	p values
Conservatism X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.239	0.082	4.541	0.003**
Tradition X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.289	0.085	5.187	0.001**
Uncertainty avoidance X Tourist ethnocentrism	0.331	0.091	5.659	0.000**

Notes: Level of statistical significance: **0.01

Source: Authors

indicate that respondents who score higher on conservatism, value tradition, or prefer structured and predictable environments are more likely to choose domestic tourist destinations. Therefore, the findings fully support hypotheses H1, H2, and H3, confirming the expected positive relationships between the examined cultural and value dimensions and the preference for domestic tourism.

Table 5 presents the results of the moderation analysis, examining the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism in the relationships between the independent variables—conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance—and tourists’ preference for domestic destinations. The Table 5 reports the interaction effects estimated within the PLS-SEM framework, providing insight into how ethnocentric orientations condition the strength and direction of value- and culture-based influences on domestic destination choice. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of tourist behavior by demonstrating the contingent nature of the examined relationships under varying levels of tourist ethnocentrism.

The results indicate that tourist ethnocentrism significantly moderates all examined relationships. Specifically, the interaction between conservatism and tourist ethnocentrism has a path coefficient of 0.239 ($t = 4.541, p < 0.01$), tradition and tourist ethnocentrism 0.289 ($t = 5.187, p < 0.01$), and uncertainty avoidance and tourist ethnocentrism 0.331 ($t = 5.659, p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that individuals with higher levels of tourist ethnocentrism exhibit a stronger positive effect of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on the preference for domestic tourist des-

tinations. Therefore, hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c are fully supported, confirming the expected moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism in reinforcing the impact of cultural and value-related dimensions on domestic tourism preferences.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study not only corroborate prior empirical research (all research hypotheses confirmed) but also provide a theoretically grounded and integrative explanation of domestic tourist destination choice rooted in cultural values and social identity mechanisms (Aguilar-Rodríguez et al., 2025; Cui et al., 2025; Pop et al., 2024; Shen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2022). The significant effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance confirm that tourists’ destination preferences are deeply embedded in stable value orientations and culturally shaped cognitive frameworks, rather than being driven solely by utilitarian or economic considerations. These results strongly support the relevance of Hofstede’s cultural framework (2001) in explaining tourism behavior, particularly in contexts characterized by strong collective identities and historically grounded value systems.

From a Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) perspective, the positive influence of conservatism and tradition suggests that domestic tourism serves as a symbolic arena in which individuals express and reinforce their membership in the national in-group. Tourists who prioritize social continuity, cultural heritage, and established norms are more

likely to perceive domestic destinations as extensions of their collective identity, thereby favoring them over foreign alternatives. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of identity affirmation and cultural embeddedness in tourism decision-making (Cui et al., 2025; Shen et al., 2022). Domestic tourism, in this sense, transcends its functional role and becomes a value-laden form of consumption through which cultural loyalty and national belonging are enacted (Lebrun & Bouchet, 2024).

Similarly, the significant impact of uncertainty avoidance underscores the importance of perceived risk and predictability in shaping tourist preferences. Consistent with Hofstede's conceptualization, individuals characterized by high uncertainty avoidance seek environments that minimize ambiguity and enhance feelings of safety and control. Domestic destinations, which offer linguistic familiarity, shared social norms, and culturally predictable settings, are therefore perceived as more attractive than foreign destinations, especially in regions such as the Balkans where uncertainty avoidance tends to be pronounced (Hofstede Insights, 2025). This finding reinforces the notion that cultural dimensions operate as cognitive filters through which tourists evaluate the desirability of alternative destinations.

Crucially, the moderating role of tourist ethnocentrism provides deeper insight into how these value-based orientations are translated into concrete destination choices. In line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and prior empirical evidence (Fernández-Ferrín et al., 2020; Prince et al., 2019), the results demonstrate that ethnocentrism amplifies the effects of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance on domestic destination preference. This suggests that ethnocentric beliefs intensify in-group favoritism by framing domestic tourism not only as a safer or more familiar option, but also as a morally appropriate and socially responsible choice. Tourist ethnocentrism thus functions as a reinforcing mechanism that strengthens the alignment between individual values and tourism behavior.

What distinguishes the present study from previous research is its holistic integration of cultural value orientations and ethnocentric attitudes within a single PLS-SEM framework. While earlier studies have predominantly examined these constructs independently or through limited relational models, this research captures their combined and interactive effects, thereby addressing an important gap in the tourism literature. By modeling tourist ethnocentrism as a moderator rather than merely a direct predictor, the study

advances theoretical understanding of how cultural values and identity-based orientations jointly shape domestic tourism preferences. Taken together, these findings highlight the necessity of adopting integrative, theory-driven approaches in tourism research. The results demonstrate that domestic destination choice emerges from a complex interplay between cultural dimensions, value orientations, and social identity processes, particularly within regions such as the Balkans where historical experiences and national identities remain highly salient. By bridging Hofstede's cultural framework with Social Identity Theory, the study offers a more comprehensive and context-sensitive explanation of tourist behavior and contributes to the advancement of culturally informed tourism theory.

6. CONCLUSION

This study explicitly situates the analysis of domestic tourist destination choice within the Balkan region, emphasizing the role of culturally embedded value orientations and tourist ethnocentrism in shaping travel preferences in this distinctive socio-cultural context. By simultaneously examining Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the research offers region-specific insights while treating the Balkans as a coherent cultural cluster characterized by shared historical experiences, strong national identities, and pronounced value systems. In doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance jointly influence tourism behavior across the region, thereby providing a context-sensitive explanation of domestic tourism preferences.

The originality of this research lies in its holistic and integrative analytical framework, which simultaneously incorporates conservatism, tradition, uncertainty avoidance, and tourist ethnocentrism within a single PLS-SEM model. Unlike prior studies that have predominantly examined these constructs in isolation or through fragmented analytical approaches, this study captures their combined and interactive effects. By conceptualizing tourist ethnocentrism as a moderating mechanism rather than merely a direct predictor, the research advances existing tourism literature and fills an important theoretical gap related to the conditional nature of domestic destination choice.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the central role of cultural values in shaping tourism behavior and extend prior frameworks by

demonstrating how ethnocentric orientations intensify the influence of conservatism, tradition, and uncertainty avoidance. The study contributes to tourism theory by bridging Hofstede's cultural dimensions with Social Identity Theory, illustrating that domestic tourism preferences emerge from the interaction of value-based orientations and identity-driven processes. This multi-dimensional perspective underscores the importance of moving beyond single-factor explanations and adopting integrative, theory-driven approaches in tourism research.

The practical implications of the study are equally significant. Policymakers and tourism marketers should explicitly account for cultural values and ethnocentric tendencies when designing strategies to promote domestic tourism. Emphasizing local traditions, cultural heritage, and national narratives, while offering structured, predictable, and culturally familiar tourism experiences, may enhance the attractiveness of domestic destinations for conservative and risk-averse travelers. Such strategies are particularly relevant in the Balkan context, where cultural continuity and national identity remain salient drivers of consumer behavior.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations that warrant careful consideration. Although stratified and quota sampling procedures were applied to ensure balanced representation across Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the sample was not based on a fully random selection of respondents. Consequently, the statistical representativeness of the findings may be constrained, and the generalizability of the results to the broader population of tourists in these countries should be interpreted with caution. Moreover, the research design is cross-sectional

in nature, with data collected at a single point in time, which limits the ability to draw firm causal inferences and does not allow for the examination of potential changes in value orientations and ethnocentric attitudes over time. In addition, the reliance on self-reported survey data collected through Likert-scale measures may give rise to social desirability bias, acquiescence bias, and potential measurement-related effects, despite efforts to minimize such influences through careful questionnaire design. Finally, while the analytical focus on three Balkan countries is theoretically grounded in their shared historical and cultural characteristics, this contextual specificity may limit the broader applicability of the findings, as the relationships between value orientations and tourism preferences may manifest differently in other cultural or regional settings.

Future research should therefore extend this line of inquiry through cross-cultural studies that compare the Balkan region with other cultural clusters, such as Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, or non-European contexts, in order to test the robustness and boundary conditions of the proposed model. Longitudinal research designs would also be valuable for capturing how domestic tourism preferences and ethnocentric tendencies evolve over time, particularly in response to economic fluctuations, geopolitical developments, or external crises. Moreover, future studies could incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables—such as economic constraints, prior travel experience, digital media influence, or destination image—and combine quantitative approaches with qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the underlying motivations driving domestic tourism behavior.

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Apstrakt

Konzervativizam, tradicija i izbegavanje neizvesnosti kao determinante izbora domaćih turističkih destinacija na Balkanu: moderatorska uloga turističkog etnocentrizma

Stefan Zdravković, Dragana Gašević,
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Osnovni cilj ovog istraživanja jeste da se ispita uticaj konzervativizma, tradicije i izbegavanja neizvesnosti (jedne od Hofstedeovih dimenzija nacionalne kulture) na izbor domaćih turističkih destinacija, kao i moderatorska uloga turističkog etnocentrizma. Empirijsko istraživanje sprovedeno je početkom 2025. godine na uzorku od 977 ispitanika iz Srbije, Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine, primenom anketne metode. Analiza podataka izvršena je korišćenjem softverskog paketa SmartPLS 4. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na to da konzervativizam, tradicija i izbegavanje neizvesnosti ostvaruju statistički značajan i pozitivan direktan uticaj na izbor domaćih turističkih destinacija. Takođe, nalazi potvrđuju da turistički etnocentrizam ima značajnu moderator-

sku ulogu u svim ispitivanim odnosima, dodatno jačajući vezu između nezavisnih varijabli i preferencije domaćih destinacija. Ovi rezultati ukazuju na centralnu ulogu kulturnih i vrednosnih dimenzija u oblikovanju turističkog ponašanja u balkanskom kontekstu. Teorijski doprinos rada ogleda se u integraciji kulturnih faktora i etnocentrizma u analizi potrošačkih preferencija u turizmu, dok praktične implikacije pružaju smernice za kreiranje marketing strategija usmerenih na promociju domaćeg turizma u regionu.

Ključne reči: *konzervativizam, tradicija, izbegavanje neizvesnosti, turistički etnocentrizam, domaće turističke destinacije, Balkan*

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The impact of the synergistic effect of traditional and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products

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Abstract: In the contemporary marketing environment, companies increasingly combine traditional and digital communication channels in order to achieve a greater impact on consumer behavior. In this context, the concept of media synergy is of particular importance, implying that the combined use of multiple media can produce a stronger effect than the individual use of each medium. Based on this concept, this paper examines the synergistic effect of traditional and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products. The aim of this paper is to determine whether the combination of traditional media (television, radio and print media) and modern digital direct marketing channels (websites, email marketing, mobile marketing and social media) has a statistically significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the synergistic effect through the interaction between individual media. The research results indicate the existence of a statistically significant synergistic effect in several combinations of traditional and modern media. The results show that the integration of traditional and digital communication channels can strengthen consumers' purchase intentions. The scientific contribution of this paper lies in the empirical verification of the synergistic effect of direct marketing media and in highlighting the importance of an integrated approach to marketing communication planning. The practical significance of the results lies in providing guidelines for marketing managers on how to combine traditional and digital communication channels more effectively in order to achieve better marketing results.

Keywords: *direct marketing, media synergy, traditional media, digital media, purchase intentions, integrated marketing communications*

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary market environment is characterized by increasingly intense competition and an ever-growing number of communication channels through which companies can reach consumers. The development of information and communication technologies and the widespread use of the internet have led to significant changes in the way consumers gather information, form attitudes toward brands, and make purchasing decisions. Under such conditions, companies increasingly rely on integrated marketing communications, which involve the coordinated use of various communication channels with the aim of achieving clear, consistent, and effective communication with the target audience.

One of the important concepts within integrated marketing communications is the synergistic effect of media. Synergy refers to a situation in which the combined use of multiple media leads to a stronger impact on consumers compared to the individual use of each medium. In other words, the combined effect of different media activities exceeds the sum of their individual effects. It is especially important to examine the synergy between traditional media, such as television, radio, and print media, and modern digital communication channels (websites, social media, email, and mobile marketing), as their integration can lead to more significant marketing outcomes.

In the context of direct marketing, the joint use of different media can significantly influence consumer behavior, especially in forming purchase intentions. Traditional media often play a role in attracting attention and creating brand awareness, while digital channels provide additional information, interaction, and more direct communication with consumers. For this reason, examining the synergistic effect between traditional and modern direct marketing media represents an important step in understanding their combined role in the purchase decision-making process. Starting from the above, this paper analyzes whether the combined use of traditional and contemporary direct marketing media leads to a sta-

tistically significant synergistic effect on the purchase intentions of branded products.

The paper begins with a review of the relevant literature on integrated marketing communications, media synergy, and the role of traditional and modern direct marketing media in shaping consumer behavior. It then presents the research methodology, including the research subject, objectives, and hypothesis, as well as the sample characteristics, measurement instruments, and statistical methods employed. This is followed by an analysis and interpretation of the empirical findings, with particular emphasis on examining the synergistic effects arising from the combined use of different direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products. The paper concludes by outlining the main findings, the scientific and practical contributions of the study, its limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of integrated marketing communications has led to an increasing interest in the concept of media synergy. The basic idea of this concept is that the combined use of multiple communication channels can have a stronger impact on consumers than when each channel is used individually. Media synergy is defined as a situation in which the combined effect of multiple media activities exceeds the sum of their individual effects (Naik & Raman, 2003). These authors emphasize that synergy is achieved when communication channels are well-coordinated, that is, when there is alignment in terms of message content, timing of message delivery, and target audience.

Within integrated marketing communications, media do not function independently; instead, they complement one another and strengthen the overall effects of marketing communication. For this reason, the planning of communication activities increasingly depends on a coordinated and multichannel approach. Recent studies further confirm that the integration of social media has become an essential component of the IMC framework, given its influence on brand identity, brand image, and the overall market performance of the company (Rehman et al., 2022). Similarly, Harizi and Trebicka (2023) argue that the inclusion of social media in integrated marketing communications enhances communication efficiency, increases consumer engagement, and supports brand promotion, largely owing to the opportunity for two-way interaction between companies and consumers.

With the development of the internet and digital platforms, research on media synergy has increasingly focused on the analysis of the joint use of traditional and digital communication channels. Traditional media, such as television, radio, and print media, play a significant role in attracting attention and creating brand awareness, while digital channels enable interaction, additional information, and more direct communication with consumers. Earlier studies have shown that the combination of television and internet advertising can produce more favorable outcomes than the use of a single medium alone (Chang & Thorson, 2004), while social media may further strengthen the effects of traditional advertising on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions (Naik & Peters, 2009). In more recent literature, this relationship is increasingly examined through the lens of the omnichannel approach. Butkouskaya et al. (2023) argue that, from the consumer's perspective, the key dimensions of modern integrated communications are consistency, interactivity, and channel connectivity, as these dimensions contribute to a more positive evaluation of both the product and the retail service. These findings suggest that modern integrated communications should not be understood merely as the coordination of multiple channels, but rather as the creation of a coherent and interconnected communication experience for the consumer.

Modern digital marketing has further increased the importance of integrated communications by enabling companies to achieve more precise targeting, greater interactivity, message personalization, and faster measurement of campaign effects. Jadhav et al. (2023) note that digital marketing has become a significant factor in the competitiveness and development of enterprises, particularly in the context of accelerated technological transformation and the growing need for more efficient connections with consumers. In this context, digital channels are no longer regarded merely as a supplement to traditional forms of communication, but rather as an integral component of a modern communication strategy. Rehman et al. (2022) further emphasize that the growing importance of social media has reshaped the understanding of the IMC concept, as these platforms have become a key vehicle for managing consumer relationships and enhancing overall brand visibility. Accordingly, digital marketing further reinforces the need to integrate all communication activities into a unified system of market relationship management.

When examining the synergistic effects of traditional media and social online media on consumer be-

havior, it can be argued that their combined influence has a greater impact on consumers than the effects of each medium considered separately (Tarabieh, 2017; Voorveld, 2011). Previous research also indicates that activity on social media can significantly enhance the effects of traditional advertising, particularly television advertising (Kumar et al., 2017). When consumers notice a higher number of interactions on social media (shares, comments, „likes“), they are more likely to pay attention to advertisements in traditional media and form more positive attitudes toward the brand. For this reason, social media should not be seen as a replacement for traditional advertising but as a complementary channel that can enhance its effectiveness (Chang & Thorson, 2004).

Consumer behavior in the purchase decision-making process increasingly involves a combination of online and offline information sources. Consumers often use digital channels, such as reviews, blogs, and social media, but at the same time also rely on traditional information sources, such as recommendations from family and friends, salespeople, or print media. It is particularly emphasized that online information exchange between consumers is significant in services, because services cannot be fully assessed before consumption (Bigne et al., 2018). Therefore, the combination of different information sources plays an important role in forming attitudes and purchase intentions (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). Companies should design and coordinate their traditional and digital communication activities so that they jointly influence the formation of positive consumer attitudes and strengthen brand loyalty. In this regard, the quality and credibility of the communication message represent an important factor that can influence purchasing intentions after consumers have been exposed to marketing messages (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Based on the foregoing, it may be concluded that modern digital channels, especially social media, should not be regarded as a substitute for traditional media, but rather as their complementary extension within an integrated communication strategy. The joint use of traditional and modern media enables a stronger communication effect, higher consumer engagement, and a more substantial influence on the formation of purchase intention.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of the empirical research in this paper is to examine the synergistic effect of the combined use of

traditional and modern direct marketing media on the intention to purchase branded products. The research is focused on determining whether the combination of different communication channels leads to a stronger impact on consumers' purchase intentions compared to the individual use of media.

Drawing on the theoretical foundations and the findings of previous empirical research, the paper formulates the main research hypothesis as follows: *The combined use of traditional and modern direct marketing media generates a statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' intention to purchase branded products.*

The study applied a quantitative research approach, with data collected using a survey method. The survey was conducted through a structured questionnaire that contained questions about the perception of the influence of different direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions. Respondents assessed the impact of individual media on the intention to purchase branded products using a Likert scale, rating the degree of agreement with the provided statements on a scale from 1 to 5. Primary data were collected electronically and through face-to-face surveys, ensuring representativeness and an optimal sample size.

The research was conducted on a sample of 405 respondents who use various communication media and are exposed to marketing messages through traditional and digital channels. When it comes to traditional direct marketing activities, three independent variables were formed. Television, as the first variable, was measured using six items adopted from studies by Salelaw and Singh (2015), Haque et al. (2012), and Tong and Hawley (2009). Radio, as the second variable, was also measured through six items from the study carried out by Salelaw and Singh (2015). Regarding print media, the basis for forming this variable consists of four items from studies conducted by Perčić (2018) and Haque et al. (2012). On the other hand, for modern direct marketing activities, four independent variables were formed based on items taken from several foreign studies. The website as a modern direct marketing medium is measured based on items from research conducted by Onana (2021), Momen et al. (2020), and Haque et al. (2012). Email marketing as a variable is formed based on items from studies conducted by Onana (2021) and Mahmoud (2015), while mobile marketing as a variable is based on studies conducted by Onana (2021) and Martins et al. (2019). The final modern medium included in the study is social media, observed through items used in the works of Shah et al. (2019), Hanaysha (2016),

and Ahmed and Zahid (2014). Purchase intention is considered the dependent variable and is measured through three items taken from studies conducted by Majeed et al. (2021), Martins et al. (2019), and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2013).

The statistical program SPSS was used for data processing and analysis. Multiple regression analysis was applied in the study, which allows examining the impact of several independent variables on a single dependent variable. In total, 12 regression models were formed, representing different combinations of the analyzed traditional and modern media. By comparing the values of the coefficient of determination in models with and without an interaction variable, the importance of the synergistic effect between direct marketing media was assessed.

The basic characteristics of the sample were analyzed through sociodemographic characteristics such as gender, age, education, and frequency of use of different media. Regarding gender, two-thirds of the sample are women (268 respondents), while men make up the remaining 33.8% (137 respondents). In the age structure of the sample, it is observed that the largest number of respondents belongs to the respondents aged 30 to 39 years (37.3%), while there is a smaller share of respondents of the younger generation aged 20 to 29 years (26.4%) and the older generation aged 40 to 49 years (25.9%). The youngest and oldest respondents account for only 10% of the total number of respondents. When it comes to educational structure, the largest number of respondents have higher education (39.8%), followed by secondary education (33.8%) and the highest level of education (26.4%). The majority of respondents live in urban (70.9%) and suburban areas (18%), while only 11% of respondents live in villages. Regarding the way of getting information about a brand, respondents most frequently use traditional sources of information (in-store), in 36.8% of cases. An important channel for obtaining information about a fashion brand is also modern channels, such as social media (31.4%) and websites (24%), while traditional channels (radio, television, newspapers) account for only 7.8%.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Based on the results of previous research, it can be observed that media synergy represents an important concept within integrated marketing communications. The combined use of different communication channels allows companies to achieve a stronger im-

act on consumers, as different media affect different stages of the decision-making process and complement each other. The contemporary media environment is characterized by an increasing interconnectedness of traditional and digital communication platforms, which further emphasizes the importance of their integrated application. Research shows that coordinated use of multiple media can lead to a stronger impact on consumer attitudes, brand perception, and purchase intentions, compared to the isolated use of individual communication channels. For this reason, modern marketing strategies are increasingly based on an integrated approach to consumer communication.

Based on the aforementioned theoretical and empirical findings, it can be concluded that examining the synergistic effect of different media is significant for understanding contemporary consumer behavior. Therefore, this paper will examine the synergistic effect of the combined use of traditional and modern direct marketing media on the purchase intentions of branded products. In other words, it will be determined whether the combined use of two direct marketing media (one traditional and one modern medium) can produce a statistically significant interaction effect on purchase intentions. For this purpose, 12 research models were developed, based on different combinations of the analyzed media.

For the purposes of this analysis, multiple regression is used as one of the most commonly applied techniques for examining the relationship between a dependent variable and several independent variables. The synergistic effect between selected traditional and modern direct marketing media is tested through several multiple regression models, while the interaction effect in the regression model is represented as the product of two independent variables. Accordingly, the analysis is based on the following regression model:

$$\hat{y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_1 x_2$$

where:

\hat{y} – value of the dependent variable (purchase intention);

β_0 – intercept (constant term);

β_1 – regression coefficient of the first independent variable (traditional medium);

β_2 – regression coefficient of the second independent variable (modern medium);

β_3 – regression coefficient of the interaction term between the independent variables;

x_1 – value of the first independent variable (traditional medium);
 x_2 – value of the second independent variable (modern medium);
 x_1x_2 – interaction term (product of the two independent variables).

The following tables present regression models derived from different combinations of the analyzed media, with the aim of determining the synergistic effect that these media have on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products. In order to provide a clear answer regarding the existence and strength of the synergistic effect, it is necessary to assess the statistical significance of the interaction term. Additionally, for all models, the coefficient of determination without the interaction term will also be presented. By comparing the two coefficients of determination, conclusions can be drawn about the importance of the synergistic effect of different direct marketing media on purchase intentions.

Table 1 presents the results of four regression models examining the joint use of television as a traditional medium and one modern direct marketing medium (website, email marketing, mobile marketing, and social media) in each model. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that all proposed models are

statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Higher values of the coefficient of determination were observed when the synergistic effect was included compared with models without the interaction effect.

Further analysis shows that the statistical significance of the synergistic effect between the two media is confirmed in Model 1 and Model 4. Specifically, the combined use of television and a website produce a positive and statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products ($\beta = 0.138$, $p < 0.01$). A similar effect is observed with the combined use of television and social media ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, it should be noted that in both models the coefficient of determination is higher when the synergistic effect is included ($R^2 = 0.383$ and $R^2 = 0.356$) than when it is not ($R^2 = 0.349$ and $R^2 = 0.309$), which further confirms the validity of the model and the obtained results. In the remaining two regression models (Model 2 and Model 3), the synergistic effect on purchase intentions is present but not statistically significant.

Table 2 presents the results of four regression models examining the joint use of radio as a traditional medium and one modern direct marketing medium (website, email marketing, mobile marketing, and social media) in each model. Based on the obtained

Table 1: The synergistic effect of television and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.
Intercept (const.)	3,790	10,675	4,681	17,095	4,325	15,664	4,287	12,749
Television	-0,717	-5,946	-0,490	-4,258	-0,281	-2,384	-0,916	-7,318
Website	0,148	1,740						
Email marketing			-0,011	-0,118				
Mobile marketing					0,117	1,111		
Social media							0,081	0,918
Television*Website	0,138	4,698						
	(0,000)*							
Television*Email marketing			0,059	1,747				
			(0,081)					
Television*Mobile marketing					-0,008	-0,219		
					(0,827)			
Television*Social media							0,174	5,378
							(0,000)*	
R² (without interaction)	0,349		0,084		0,073		0,309	
R² (with interaction)	0,383		0,091		0,073		0,356	
F-value	82,835		13,444		10,493		73,804	
Sig.	0,000		0,000		0,000		0,000	

* The interaction between the variables is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$)

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 25.

Table 2: The synergistic effect of radio and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products

Variables	Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.
Intercept (const.)	3,321	11,554	4,604	22,559	4,672	21,880	3,913	14,697
Radio	-0,521	-5,436	-0,648	-5,930	-0,698	-5,892	-0,799	-7,550
Website	0,271	3,904						
Email marketing			0,071	1,068				
Mobile marketing					0,078	1,030		
Social media							0,170	2,442
Radio*Website	0,073 (0,004)*	2,874						
Radio*Email marketing			0,052 (0,090)	1,698				
Radio*Mobile marketing					0,057 (0,084)	1,732		
Radio*Social media							0,130 (0,000)*	4,440
R2 (without interaction)	0,387		0,232		0,231		0,371	
R2 (with interaction)	0,399		0,238		0,237		0,400	
F-value	88,804		41,704		41,563		89,286	
Sig.	0,000		0,000		0,000		0,000	

* The interaction between the variables is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$)

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 25.

results, it can be concluded that all models are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Higher values of the coefficient of determination are observed when the synergistic effect is included compared with models without the interaction effect.

Further analysis indicates that the statistical significance of the synergistic effect between the two media is confirmed in Model 5 and Model 8. The joint use of radio and a website produce a positive and statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products ($\beta = 0.073$, $p < 0.01$). A similar effect is observed with the joint use of radio and social media ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, in both models the coefficient of determination is higher when the synergistic effect is included ($R^2 = 0.399$ and $R^2 = 0.400$) than when it is not ($R^2 = 0.387$ and $R^2 = 0.371$), which further confirms the validity of the models and the obtained results. In the remaining two regression models (Model 6 and Model 7), the synergistic effect on purchase intentions is present but not statistically significant.

Table 3 presents the results of four regression models examining the joint use of print media as a traditional medium and one modern direct marketing medium (website, email marketing, mobile mar-

keting, and social media) in each model. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that only Model 9 and Model 12 are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). On the other hand, in all four presented models higher or equal values of the coefficient of determination are observed when the synergistic effect is included compared with models without the interaction effect.

The statistical significance of the synergistic effect between the two media was confirmed in Model 9 and Model 12. In other words, the combined use of print media and a website produce a positive and statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < 0.01$). A much stronger and statistically more significant effect is observed in Model 12, which examines the combined influence of print and social media ($\beta = 0.131$, $p < 0.01$). It should also be noted that in both models the coefficient of determination is higher when the synergistic effect is included ($R^2 = 0.331$ and $R^2 = 0.274$, respectively) than when it is not ($R^2 = 0.316$ and $R^2 = 0.247$, respectively). In the remaining two regression models (Model 10 and Model 11), the synergistic effect on purchase intentions is present but not statistically significant.

Table 3: The synergistic effect of print media and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products

Variables	Model 9		Model 10		Model 11		Model 12	
	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.	β	T stat.
Intercept (const.)	2,810	7,779	3,753	13,232	3,870	13,579	3,479	10,060
Print media	-0,368	-2,961	0,011	0,096	0,055	0,498	-0,616	-4,585
Website	0,301	3,436						
Email marketing			0,066	0,655				
Mobile marketing					-0,018	-0,160		
Social media							0,205	2,207
Print media*Website	0,087 (0,004)**	2,934						
Print media*Email marketing			-0,011 (0,743)	-0,329				
Print media*Mobile marketing					-0,013 (0,719)	-0,360		
Print media*Social media							0,131 (0,000)*	3,861
R2 (without interaction)	0,316		0,002		0,003		0,247	
R2 (with interaction)	0,331		0,002		0,003		0,274	
F-value	66,030		0,243		0,406		50,384	
Sig.	0,000		0,866		0,749		0,000	

* The interaction between the variables is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < 0.01$)

Source: Author's calculation based on SPSS 25.

5. DISCUSSION

The obtained results support the main assumption of the study that the combined use of traditional and modern direct marketing media can generate a synergistic effect on consumers' intention to purchase branded products. The findings suggest that this synergistic effect is not equally pronounced across all media combinations, but is statistically significant primarily in cases where television, radio, and print media are combined with websites and social media. Of particular importance is the fact that these combinations resulted in an increase in the coefficient of determination in the interaction models, indicating that the joint effect of the observed media explains purchase intentions more effectively than the effects of each medium considered separately.

Such results are largely consistent with previous research on media synergy within integrated marketing communications. Above all, the finding that the combination of television and website achieves a statistically significant positive effect confirms earlier insights of authors who pointed out that the joint use of television and internet advertising can be more effective than the individual use of just one medium (Chang & Thorson, 2004). At the same time, the re-

sults of this study also support the findings of Naik and Raman (2003) that the greatest communication effects are achieved when different media are not used in isolation, but in a coordinated and mutually consistent manner. In this sense, the research results further confirm that communication effects cannot be fully understood by observing individual channels alone, but only through their interaction.

An important contribution of this study lies in confirming that social media, when combined with all observed traditional media, generates a statistically significant synergistic effect on purchase intention. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Tarabieh (2017), Kumar et al. (2017), and Voorveld (2011), which indicate that social media does not function merely as an independent promotional channel, but can also amplify the effects of traditional advertising on consumer attitudes, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. The obtained results are further aligned with more recent interpretations of the IMC concept, according to which social media plays a central role in linking different communication touchpoints and strengthening overall brand visibility and relevance. Accordingly, the findings of this study confirm that social media should not be regarded as a substitute for

traditional media, but rather as their complementary extension within an integrated communication strategy.

By contrast, the results related to email marketing and mobile marketing indicate that their interaction with traditional media was not statistically significant in this study. This finding does not suggest that these channels lack marketing relevance; rather, it implies that, within the observed sample and the applied models, they did not exhibit a sufficiently strong combined effect with the traditional media examined. One possible interpretation is that the effects of email and mobile marketing often depend on a greater degree of personalization, an established relationship with the consumer, the timing of the message, and the individual relevance of the content. As a result, their synergy with mass traditional media may be less pronounced than that observed for websites and social media. Accordingly, the findings of this study partially support previous research by confirming the general importance of media integration, while also demonstrating that not all digital channels generate the same level of synergistic effect.

The findings of this study may also be interpreted in light of the contemporary omnichannel approach. Butkouskaya et al. (2023) emphasize that, from the consumer's perspective, the key dimensions of modern integrated communications are consistency, interactivity, and channel connectivity. The media combinations that demonstrated statistical significance in this study can be linked to these dimensions, as they enable broad reach, access to additional information, interaction, and continuity in the communication experience. In this regard, the findings contribute to the understanding that synergy is not achieved through the mere combination of media, but through the strategic integration of channels that create a unified and coherent brand experience for the consumer.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm the relevance of the theoretical assumptions underlying media synergy and provide empirical support for the view that the integrated use of traditional and modern media can exert a stronger influence on purchase intention than their separate use. At the same time, the results indicate that the synergistic effect depends on the specific combination of media, with the most effective combinations being those that bring together the mass reach of traditional media and the informativeness, interactivity, and accessibility of websites and social media. Accordingly, this paper not only confirms the findings of previous studies, but also extends them by precisely identifying the media combinations

that, within the given research framework, contribute most significantly to explaining consumers' purchase intentions.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that the combination of different media channels within direct marketing has a significant impact on the formation of consumers' purchase intentions. The obtained results indicate that the integrated use of traditional and modern media can lead to a stronger communication effect, that is, to the emergence of a synergistic effect between different advertising channels. In this context, the importance of the coordinated use of multiple media is particularly emphasized, as it allows the promotional message to be delivered through multiple communication touchpoints and thereby achieve a stronger impact on consumers.

A review of the existing literature indicates that modern media play an increasingly important role in contemporary advertising strategies. The development of the internet, digital platforms, and social media has enabled companies to develop new ways of communicating with consumers, as well as greater interactivity, personalization, and faster distribution of promotional messages. However, despite the growing importance of digital channels, managers should not neglect traditional forms of advertising. On the contrary, in line with the objectives of the marketing strategy, it is necessary to carefully select a combination of media that will achieve the greatest communication impact and contribute to a more effective influence on consumers.

In other words, traditional and modern media should not be viewed as competing alternatives but as complementary elements of integrated marketing communications. Abandoning traditional media may lead to the loss of potential synergistic effects that occur when different media are used simultaneously. The combination of multiple media channels can lead to a stronger effect of promotional messages, as consumers receive the same message through different communication channels, which contributes to better message recall, greater persuasive impact, and a higher likelihood of forming a positive attitude toward the product or brand.

Due to the significant role that different direct marketing media play in shaping consumer behavior, it is important to consider the synergistic effect that can be achieved through their joint application. The

results of the empirical research conducted within this study confirm the importance of the synergistic effect. The analysis showed that all traditional media, when combined with websites and social media, have a positive and statistically significant impact on purchase intention. It is particularly noteworthy that in all three research models examining the combination of a website with one of the traditional media (radio, television, and print media), a positive and statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' purchase intention was identified. The most pronounced synergistic effect was observed in the case of the combination of websites and television as direct marketing channels.

In addition to the combination of a website and traditional media, the research results indicate that social media in combination with traditional media also produce a positive and statistically significant synergistic effect on consumers' purchase intentions. In all three analyzed models (social media in combination with radio, television, and print media), the presence of a synergistic effect was confirmed, with the most pronounced effect observed in the combination of social media and television as direct marketing media. Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that modern digital media, such as websites and social media, should not be used as a replacement for traditional forms of advertising. On the contrary, they should be viewed as an important element of an integrated marketing communications strategy, which in combination with traditional media can generate a

significant synergistic effect and contribute to greater effectiveness of companies' marketing activities.

The scientific contribution of this paper lies in the empirical examination of the synergistic effect of the joint use of traditional and modern direct marketing media on consumers' purchase intentions for branded products. The research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on media synergy within integrated marketing communications by highlighting the importance of interaction between different communication channels. The practical contribution of the paper lies in providing guidelines for marketing managers on how to more effectively plan and combine traditional and digital media within a marketing communication strategy in order to achieve a stronger impact on consumer behavior and increase the effectiveness of marketing activities.

This research has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. The study included a limited number of direct marketing communication channels, and therefore the results do not encompass all forms of modern digital communication. Future research could expand the analysis by including other digital channels, such as influencer marketing, video platforms, and search engine advertising. It is also recommended to apply different methodological approaches and expand the sample size in order to obtain more reliable and comprehensive results. This would enable a deeper understanding of the synergistic effects between media within integrated marketing communications.

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Apstrakt

Uticaj sinergije tradicionalnih i savremenih medija direktnog marketinga na nameru kupovine brendiranih proizvoda

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U savremenom marketinškom okruženju kompanije sve češće kombinuju tradicionalne i digitalne komunikacione kanale kako bi ostvarile veći uticaj na ponašanje potrošača. U tom kontekstu poseban značaj ima koncept medijske sinergije, koji podrazumeva da zajednička primena više medija može proizvesti snažniji efekat u odnosu na pojedinačnu upotrebu svakog od njih. Polazeći od ovog koncepta, predmet istraživanja u radu jeste ispitivanje sinergetskog efekta tradicionalnih i savremenih medija direktnog marketinga na namere kupovine brendiranih proizvoda. Cilj rada je da se utvrdi da li kombinacija tradicionalnih medija (televizija, radio i štampani mediji) i savremenih digitalnih kanala direktnog marketinga (veb-sajt, imejl marketing, mobilni marketing i društvene mreže) dovodi do statistički značajnog uticaja na nameru kupovine potrošača. Za potrebe analize primenjena je metoda višestruke regresione analize, pri čemu je sinergetski efekat ispitivan kroz inte-

rakciju između pojedinačnih medija. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na postojanje statistički značajnog sinergetskog efekta u više kombinacija tradicionalnih i savremenih medija. Dobijeni rezultati pokazuju da integracija tradicionalnih i digitalnih komunikacionih kanala može doprineti jačanju namere kupovine kod potrošača. Naučni doprinos rada ogleda se u empirijskoj verifikaciji sinergetskog efekta medija direktnog marketinga i u ukazivanju na značaj integrisanog pristupa u planiranju marketinških komunikacija. Praktični značaj rezultata ogleda se u pružanju smernica marketing menadžerima za efikasnije kombinovanje tradicionalnih i digitalnih kanala komunikacije u cilju postizanja boljih marketinških rezultata.

Ključne reči: *direktni marketing, medijska sinergija, tradicionalni mediji, digitalni mediji, namere kupovine, integrisane marketing komunikacije*

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The impact of influencer characteristics on brand attitude and purchase intention: The mediating effect of consumer attitudes

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Abstract: Consumers, as social beings, are susceptible to influences from their environment, among which reference groups play a significant role. The development of the internet and social media has led to changes in consumer behavior patterns, with influencers emerging as key actors in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions. The subject of this research is to examine the impact of key influencer characteristics, attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, product endorsement, and their congruence with the brand, on consumer attitudes and intentions. A special focus is placed on the mediating role of consumer attitudes toward the brand in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention. This approach enables the observation of both direct and indirect effects of influencers on consumer behavior. The aim of the study is to determine how perceptual characteristics of influencers affect consumer attitudes toward the brand and to what extent their public endorsement of products contributes to shaping consumer behavior in the purchase decision-making process. The research was conducted using a quantitative methodology, applying a survey questionnaire on a convenience sample of 304 respondents. The contribution of the paper lies in a better understanding of the influence of influencers on consumer behavior and in providing practical guidelines for digital marketing, particularly regarding the strategic selection of influencers for campaigns.

Keywords: *reference groups, influencers, brand attitude, purchase intentions*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Consumers are susceptible to social influences and therefore do not act independently of their environment (Hammerl et al., 2016). Within the field of consumer behavior, reference groups play a significant role and can be defined as groups of people who substantially influence an individual's attitudes or actions (Fratu, 2011). Typical reference groups include family members, friends, and coworkers. These groups establish standards, norms, and values that serve as guidelines for individuals when making decisions (Kristiningsih et al., 2022). Maričić (2008) emphasizes that reference groups play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, which makes them highly relevant for firms' marketing strategies. According to this author, such groups exert a considerable influence on purchasing decisions related to various products and services, as well as on the selection of specific brands and product types. Within consumer behavior analysis, it is of key importance for marketing professionals to identify so-called identification reference groups. These groups comprise those that individuals perceive as relevant to themselves, as they recognize similarities with the members of these groups that create a sense of connection. The likelihood that certain consumers will become part of an identification reference group depends on various factors. In this context, Solomon et al. (2006) highlight key aspects such as proximity, frequency of exposure, and the degree of group cohesiveness. These elements play a significant role in how individuals form their attitudes and purchase decisions, providing marketers with valuable insights for designing effective strategies.

The development of the Internet and its increasing adoption have brought about changes in the concept of consumer behavior. According to data from the Global Digital Report (Kemp, 2022), as many as 84% of citizens of the Republic of Serbia use the Internet, while 57.5% of them regularly use social media. Within these communities, reference groups, that is, groups of people whose attitudes and behaviors individuals adopt

as guidelines, play an important role in shaping consumer decisions and attitudes. However, the digital environment has also given rise to new types of influential actors, known as influencers, who have assumed the role of key opinion leaders in the virtual world. Influencers are social media users who have gained credibility in specific domains and possess the ability to reach a wide audience, enabling them to influence others through their authenticity, expertise, and online presence (Lim et al., 2017). Vukmirović et al. (2020) point out that digital transformation and the growing use of social media have encouraged the increasing engagement of influencers, who compete as key figures in shaping consumer attitudes and decisions. Similarly, Peković et al. (2019) demonstrate that influencers significantly shape purchase intentions, with trust and perceived usefulness acting as important mediators, confirming that this is a key modern marketing channel that is becoming an essential element of any marketing strategy.

Although numerous studies examine the impact of influencer characteristics, such as attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on consumers' attitudes and intentions, only a limited number of studies systematically investigate the mediating role of consumers' attitudes toward the brand in this relationship, particularly in the context of digital marketing and social media. There is a lack of empirical evidence regarding how the perceived attractiveness of influencers affects purchase intention both directly and indirectly through brand attitudes. This gap indicates the need for empirical examination of the mediating effect of consumers' attitudes in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention.

The subject of this research is the examination of the influence of key influencer characteristics, namely expertise, attractiveness, trustworthiness, product endorsement, and congruence with the brand on consumers' attitudes and intentions. Special emphasis is placed on the mediating role of consumers' attitudes toward the brand in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention. This approach enables an assessment of both the direct and indirect effects of influencers on consumer behavior in digital marketing. The objective of the study is to determine how the perceptual characteristics of influencers affect consumers' attitudes toward the brand and to what extent their public endorsement of products contributes to shaping consumer behavior in the purchase decision-making process.

The first part of this paper focuses on the theoretical framework, in which influencer characteristics

and their impact on consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions are examined in detail. In order to empirically investigate these relationships, a study was conducted on a sample of 304 respondents. Primary data were collected using a survey method in the areas of Arandelovac, Kragujevac, and Lazarevac. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, simple and multiple regression analysis, as well as mediation analysis. Particular attention is devoted to examining the mediating role of consumers' attitudes in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumers' purchase intention.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. The concept of reference groups

Turner (1991) links the concept of reference groups to all groups or group members that have psychological significance for an individual's attitudes and behavior. This implies that a particular reference group may exert a substantial influence on an individual in certain situations, even if the individual is not formally a member of that group. In such cases, the group represents one to which the individual aspires, leading to the adoption of its norms and rules of behavior. Individuals' behavior, attitudes, opinions, and desires are largely shaped by the influence of the reference groups to which they belong. Reference groups are those that directly or indirectly affect the formation of individuals' attitudes and behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

The concept of a "reference group" may refer not only to a group of people or institutions but also to an individual whom a person uses as a benchmark in the development of personal opinions, evaluations, attitudes, and behavior (Mihic, 2006). Research on levels of aspiration conducted by Chapman and Volkmann (1939) is frequently cited within reference group theory. This research examines how each individual's level of aspiration varies as a result of comparing their own group with other groups. According to this approach, a reference group functions as a standard or point of comparison that individuals use when forming their evaluations, particularly with regard to their own position within a given situation. In this way, any group with which an individual is familiar may become a reference group. When an individual becomes a member of a group, they adopt its behavioral patterns, attitudes, values, and norms as their own. This, in turn, influences their behavior, including the selec-

tion of products they choose to purchase. The same product may be perceived differently by different reference groups across cultures (Šapić, 2015).

Reference groups influence consumer behavior through three primary mechanisms (Solomon et al., 2006). Informational influence involves the exchange of information that helps consumers better understand group norms and reduce perceived purchase risk. Normative influence refers to conformity to group rules in order to gain acceptance or avoid sanctions, while identification influence arises when individuals adopt group values as part of their identity, thereby shaping their consumption style. Group influence depends on different types of power - reward power, coercive power, referent power, expert power, legitimate power, and informational power (French & Raven, 1959), which determine the degree of persuasiveness and consumers' willingness to accept group norms and recommendations.

Numerous empirical studies confirm the importance of reference groups in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the formation of brand perception, brand identification, and purchase decision-making. Through two experimental studies, Escalas and Bettman (2003) demonstrated that consumers establish emotionally meaningful connections with brands used by members of their reference groups, whether these are groups to which they already belong or groups they aspire to join. The results indicate that consumers pursuing self-enhancement goals identify more strongly with brands used by aspirational groups, whereas consumers with self-verification needs place greater value on brands used by members of their actual, existing groups. These findings suggest that brands can play an important role in the process of consumers' social identification and in the expression of personal identity within the context of group affiliation. According to the study by Ding et al. (2020), the influence of reference groups varies depending on the purchase stage. Informational influence has a consistently positive effect on purchase intention, while normative influence is more pronounced in initial purchases and less significant in repeat purchases and product upgrades.

Vimaladhevi and Thaiyalnayaki (2024) analyzed the role of different types of reference groups in fostering consumer-brand connections using a sample of 389 respondents from the city of Chennai, India. Their study identified five categories of reference groups, family, colleagues and friends, aspirational, symbolic, and commercial, which influence consumers' emotional and functional attachment to brands

in different ways. Primary and aspirational groups, in particular, exhibited a strong positive impact on the formation of consumer brand loyalty, whereas commercial groups (e.g., influencers and marketing representatives) demonstrated contradictory and even negative effects, especially when perceived as inauthentic. These results indicate that both the nature of consumers' relationships with reference groups and the credibility of those groups play a crucial role in shaping brand preferences and loyalty.

2.2. Influencers as an influential reference group of the new era

Influencers are social media users who have gained credibility in specific fields and possess the ability to reach a broad audience, which enables them to influence others through their authenticity and reach (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers are increasingly becoming a key resource for companies and marketing agencies, particularly in the context of product launches and the collection of insights into different demographic segments. Their role extends beyond short-term promotional activities, with long-term collaborations becoming more frequent and strategically more important (Casaló et al., 2020). Given that influencer marketing significantly shapes consumer behavior and purchasing habits, this form of promotion is rapidly becoming a central element of successful digital campaigns (Lim et al., 2017).

The contemporary development of information and communication technologies has dramatically transformed the way socialization occurs, transferring it into the digital sphere. Despite these changes, the fundamental human need for interaction remains unchanged. In recent years, numerous studies have examined social influence within this new context. Research by Weeks et al. (2017) demonstrates that communication on social media significantly affects the formation of consumers' beliefs, intentions, and behaviors. Susarla et al. (2012) emphasize that social influence encourages individuals to connect with like-minded people and to conform. In modern marketing, success depends on understanding and implementing insights into consumer behavior, with conformity regarded as a key psychological phenomenon. Due to the inherent human need for belonging, influencers can strategically shape their image and consumers' perceptions, as well as foster conformity among audiences (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999).

The consumer decision-making process is largely shaped by the pervasive presence of influencers and

content creators, who provide daily recommendations, information, and aesthetic guidelines that influence brand perceptions. As noted by Schouten et al. (2020), influencers enjoy a high level of credibility and audience identification, which enhances communication effectiveness and contributes to a stronger impact on consumer behavior. When audiences are already familiar with a brand, collaboration with a relevant influencer further strengthens trust and encourages purchasing, making influencer marketing a decisive factor in the digital environment. According to the studies of De Veirman et al. (2017) and Schouten et al. (2020), influencers are individuals who have managed to build a reputation based on their expertise in specific domains by regularly creating and publishing content on social media with the aim of attracting highly engaged followers. These digital personalities, often described as bloggers and vloggers, are known for their substantial social influence resulting from the large number of followers they attract (Jin & Phua, 2014). Influencers possess an above-average ability to shape others' attitudes and decisions through the content they share. They play a key role in helping potential consumers make informed purchase decisions by influencing their opinions (More & Lingam, 2019). In the context of social media, influencers can be regarded as independent third parties who mediate between companies and the public, shaping audience attitudes and perceptions (Freberg et al., 2011). Vranješ and Tomašević (2024) emphasize influencers as key opinion leaders in shaping consumer attitudes and opinions in the digital era.

2.3. Influencer characteristics

In this study, the key characteristics of influencers examined are trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. These dimensions represent the core components of source credibility, which, according to numerous authors, is essential for understanding the influence of influencers on consumers (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999; Freberg et al., 2011). The source credibility model identifies these three dimensions as the primary factors affecting consumer perceptions, brand attitude formation, and purchase intention. These characteristics have been repeatedly confirmed in the literature as the most relevant when evaluating the effectiveness of endorsers, whether they are traditional celebrities or social media influencers (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Their role is particularly pronounced in the digital environment, where credibility assessment often serves as the foundation for brand

trust and consumer engagement. Influencer trustworthiness can be described as the degree to which consumers believe that a public figure possesses integrity and honesty, making it a particularly important factor in marketing research (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). Marketing professionals seek to enhance trustworthiness by selecting endorsers who are perceived as honest, reliable, and credible. Research indicates that trustworthy endorsers have greater persuasive power and exert a significant influence on consumers' attitudes and intentions (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018).

Expertise refers to the perceived level of knowledge, skills, and competence that an influencer possesses regarding the product being promoted. It contributes to consumers' belief that the influencer knows what they are talking about and that their advice is relevant and credible (Ohanian, 1990). Till and Busler (2000) further emphasize that expertise enhances perceived relevance and congruence between the endorser and the product, particularly when there is a clear connection between the influencer's profession and the product being promoted (e.g., an athlete and sports equipment, a nutritionist and dietary supplements). In such cases, the effect of expertise is further strengthened through the congruence effect, that is, the alignment between the brand and the endorser, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the advertising message.

Attractiveness represents one of the key influencer characteristics that can strongly affect the formation of consumers' attitudes toward a brand, as well as their purchase intentions. According to numerous studies, this dimension has been identified as an important component of source credibility, particularly in the context of celebrity and influencer endorsements (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). The study by Till and Busler (2000) shows that consumers' attitudes toward a brand are significantly more favorable when the product is associated with an attractive rather than an unattractive celebrity or influencer. The authors highlight that the use of attractive endorsers in advertising can increase the effectiveness of promotional messages and contribute to positive brand perceptions. Attractiveness can function as a visual cue that facilitates acceptance of the promotional message and increases consumer attention. Petty et al. (1983) further confirm that the attractiveness of the message source significantly affects message effectiveness, as an attractive endorser increases the likelihood that the message will be accepted and positively interpreted. This effect is particularly pronounced in the context of social media, where visual communication dominates

and where the physical appearance of influencers often plays a crucial role in capturing audience attention. Erdogan et al. (2001) emphasize that the overall image of an influencer - including physical appearance, style, charm, and manner of presentation, may represent important criteria in selecting endorsers for specific products. Subsequent research has focused on the congruence between the influencer's physical appearance and the type of product being promoted, which further amplifies the impact of attractiveness on consumer behavior. The attractiveness of a public figure encompasses facial features, body type, clothing style, as well as personal traits and charisma, all of which jointly influence how the individual is perceived by the target audience. According to Kahle and Homer (1985), advertisements supported by attractive endorsers are more likely to lead to positive changes in consumers' attitudes and an increase in purchase intention. This effect is further reinforced in contemporary digital campaigns, where the visual appeal of influencers on social media has been recognized as a powerful factor in shaping consumer behavior.

According to Belanche et al. (2021) the success of influencer marketing depends on the alignment between the influencer, the product, and the consumer, commonly referred to as brand-influencer congruence. When the influencer's image is consistent with the product they promote, and followers feel a connection with the influencer, consumers perceive the products as compatible with their own interests and ideal self. Such brand-influencer congruence fosters positive attitudes, increases purchase intention, and enhances the willingness to recommend the product to others. On the other hand, a lack of brand-influencer congruence, whether between the influencer and the product or between the influencer and the consumer, can undermine trust and reduce the effectiveness of the campaign. The authors emphasize that brands must carefully select influencers whose image and values align with the brand in order to ensure campaign success.

Chen et al. (2024) emphasize that the support influencers publicly express for a product, known as product endorsement, has a significant impact on consumers' attitudes and their willingness to purchase, especially when the influencer appears transparent, professional, and delivers a credible message. Such influencers build trust among their followers by demonstrating expertise, sharing personal experiences, and using data or research as the basis for their recommendations, which facilitates the decision-making process. The authors further highlight that product

endorsement is not merely passive promotion, but an active factor that shapes consumers' attitudes and stimulates their purchase intention.

2.4. The influence of influencer characteristics on the formation of consumers' brand attitudes and their purchase decision-making intentions

In the literature, brand-influencer congruence has been recognized as one of the most important factors for the success of product promotion. Phichhang et al. (2024) conducted a large-scale quantitative study (N = 564), demonstrating that congruence between a brand and a celebrity's personality has a strong and positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand. The authors further emphasize that, beyond congruence itself, influencer expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness directly contribute to strengthening brand attitudes and increasing purchase intention. This finding supports the theoretical framework developed within social adaptation theory and congruence theory, in line with the seminal work of Kahle and Homer (1985), who formulated the *match-up hypothesis*. Kamins and Gupta (1994) further elaborated on this hypothesis by confirming that congruence between the endorser and the product enhances message credibility, while Kim and Na (2007) highlight that such congruence positively shapes attitudes and increases advertising effectiveness. Based on the results of prior research, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: Brand-influencer congruence has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

Expertise is one of the most important components of influencer credibility, defining their level of knowledge, skills, and competence related to the products or services they promote. In a seminal study, Ohanian (1990) emphasizes that expertise, together with attractiveness and trustworthiness, constitutes the three core dimensions of endorser credibility, directly influencing message acceptance and attitude formation. Singh and Banerjee (2018) developed a three-factor credibility model that includes expertise as a key component and demonstrated that it significantly affects consumers' attitudes toward the brand and advertising, as well as purchase intention. Expert influencers are perceived as reliable sources of information, thereby strengthening trust and motivating consumers to

make purchasing decisions. Lim et al. (2017), in their study on the impact of social media influencers, note that although expertise may vary depending on the context, the general conclusion is that perceived expertise contributes to positive attitudes and enhances influencer credibility. Phichhang et al. (2024) confirm that expert influencers play an important role in digital marketing by increasing message credibility and facilitating the adoption of consumer attitudes, particularly in situations where consumers seek specific and relevant product information. Thus, expertise as a dimension of credibility is fundamental to establishing trust between influencers and consumers, which is reflected in positive brand attitudes and increased purchase intention. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Influencer expertise has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

Influencer attractiveness represents a key factor in the process of shaping consumers' attitudes, particularly in the context of visual and social media, where physical appearance and aesthetic identity play a significant role. Kahle and Homer (1985) emphasize that the physical attractiveness of celebrities not only enhances positive attitudes toward a brand but also contributes to better recall of advertising messages and a greater willingness to purchase products. Their research, grounded in social adaptation theory as defined by Sherman (1980), highlights that an individual's attractiveness can encourage consumers to adopt their attitudes and behaviors, especially when there is a strong congruence with the brand. Kamins and Gupta (1994) further confirm that congruence between the visual and personal characteristics of the influencer and the brand is crucial for the effectiveness of marketing campaigns. The condition that an influencer is attractive and that this attractiveness is aligned with the brand image increases advertising credibility and generates more positive consumer perceptions. Kim and Na (2007) further develop the importance of attractiveness and its congruence with the brand, emphasizing that a high level of congruence enhances promotional effectiveness and contributes to the formation of enduring positive attitudes. Lim et al. (2017), through their analysis of influencer impact on social media, indicate that attractiveness directly influences the formation of positive consumer attitudes, although it does not always have a direct effect on purchase intention. This suggests that physical attractiveness serves as an important trigger for attention and

emotional connection, but that additional cognitive processing and attitude formation are necessary for a final purchase outcome. Jin and Phua (2014) highlight the importance of attractiveness in the context of visual platforms such as Instagram, where influencers' aesthetic identity is one of the main factors in establishing emotional bonds and trust with the audience. Overall, these findings point to the complex role of attractiveness as a factor that initiates interest and captures attention, while the realization of purchase intention requires that attractiveness be supported by positive consumer attitudes toward the brand and advertising. Based on the results of prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The attractiveness of an influencer promoting a brand has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

Influencer trustworthiness is a fundamental factor that directly affects the credibility of their recommendations and, consequently, consumers' attitudes and behavior. Mayer et al. (1995) developed one of the most influential theoretical models of trust, defining trustworthiness as the willingness to believe that another party will not betray expectations and will fulfill its promises. This model has been widely applied in communication research, including the context of digital marketing. Gefen et al. (2003) adapted this concept to the online environment, emphasizing that trustworthiness is critical for information acceptance and attitude formation in digital channels, where there is a high volume of competing messages and potential skepticism. In the context of influencer marketing, Singh and Banerjee (2018) confirm that influencer trustworthiness strongly influences consumers' attitudes toward the brand and advertising, which is reflected in increased purchase intention. Trustworthy influencers are perceived as authentic and sincere, reducing consumer skepticism and enhancing the effectiveness of promotional messages. Phichhang et al. (2024) further emphasize that in the contemporary digital environment, where consumers often doubt the sincerity of advertising messages, influencer trustworthiness becomes decisive for the success of marketing campaigns. Consumers are more likely to trust and follow recommendations from influencers whom they perceive as honest and as genuinely using the products they promote. Opris et al. (2020) confirmed in their study that authentic and persuasive product endorsement by influencers directly motivates consumers to consider and complete a purchase, demon-

strating the practical importance of trustworthiness in shaping behavioral outcomes. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Influencer trustworthiness has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

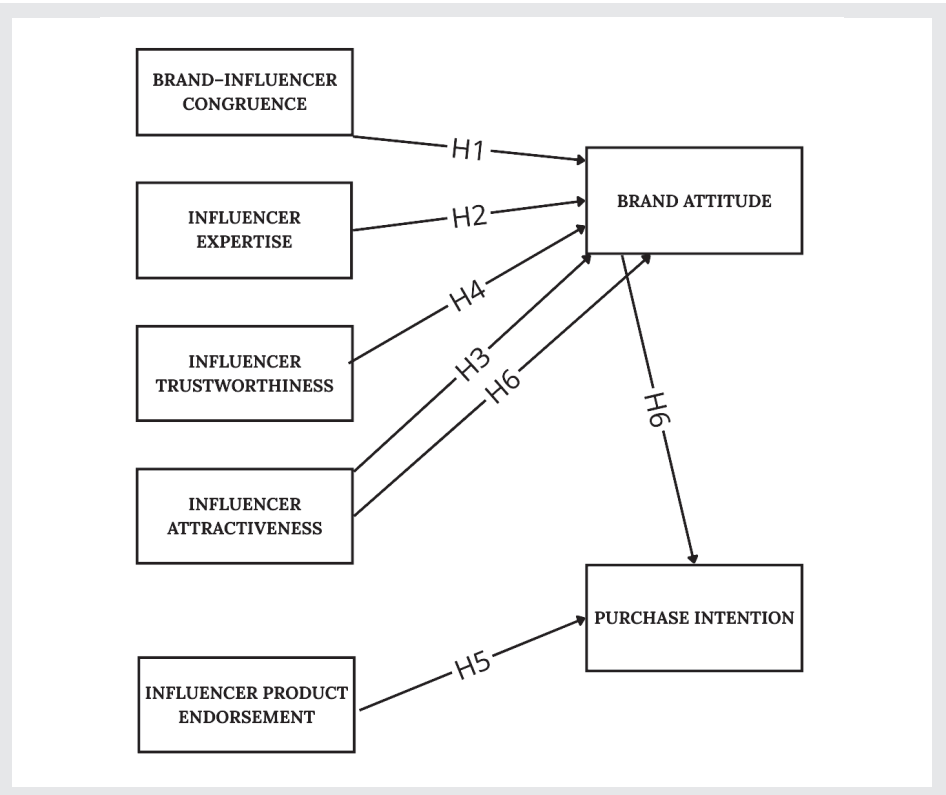
Product endorsement expressed publicly by influencers plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions, particularly in the digital era, where authenticity and engagement are decisive factors for the success of marketing campaigns. Opris et al. (2020) note that while liking an influencer does not automatically guarantee purchase, the perception of sincere and persuasive product endorsement strongly motivates consumers to seriously consider purchasing. Their study shows that such endorsement particularly affects perceptions of social status, further strengthening purchase motivation through mechanisms of identification and social validation. Casalo et al. (2020) confirm that identification with an influencer and perceived engagement in product promotion significantly increase consumers' intention to adopt the recommended product or service. This emotional connection goes beyond traditional advertising, as influencers function as role models and social exemplars, thereby amplifying the effect of their endorsement. Similarly, Ki et al. (2022), within the framework of inspiration, emphasize that influencers not only promote products but also shape social norms and behavioral standards, thereby influencing the formation of consumers' purchase intentions. Their social influence enables influencer recommendations to be perceived as personally relevant, increasing the likelihood of message acceptance and the development of purchase intention. In line with these findings, it can be concluded that influencer product endorsement does not function as passive advertising but rather as an active form of persuasive communication that builds trust and stimulates purchase intention through authenticity and engagement. Through consistent and convincing advocacy for specific brands, influencers become key drivers of purchase intentions, particularly in a digital environment where consumers are daily exposed to a large volume of information and competing messages. Based on prior research, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Influencer product endorsement has a statistically significant effect on consumers' purchase intention.

Consumers' attitudes toward the brand occupy a central position in models explaining how influencer

characteristics affect purchasing behavior. Attitude represents consumers' evaluative orientation toward a brand, formed through cognitive and affective processes, and is a strong predictor of purchase intention and actual consumer behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Lim et al. (2017) conducted a study among young social media users in Malaysia to examine how influencer characteristics affect brand purchase intention. Their findings indicate that although influencer characteristics such as attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness directly influence consumers' perceptions of a brand, their impact on purchase intention is not always direct. Accordingly, they confirm that consumers' attitudes toward the brand act as a key mediator between influencer characteristics and the final purchase decision. This means that influencer attractiveness alone is insufficient to lead to purchase unless consumers develop a positive attitude toward the brand itself. The authors conclude that brands employing influencers must consider not only their characteristics but also their ability to generate positive emotional and cognitive responses toward the brand. These findings directly support the hypothesis proposed in this study, which posits that consumers' attitudes toward the brand serve as a crucial mediator in the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention. Singh and Banerjee (2018) further support this view by emphasizing that influencer credibility strengthens consumers' attitudes toward the brand and advertising, which directly contributes to increased purchase intention. This implies that brand attitude functions as a "bridge" connecting perceptions of influencers with actual consumer behavior. Similarly, the study by Phichhang et al. (2024) demonstrates that brand-influencer congruence contributes to the formation of positive consumer attitudes, which are then decisive for the realization of purchase intention. These findings align with the broader theoretical framework in which brand attitude is regarded as an important psychological process that transforms marketing stimuli into concrete purchase decisions. In the present study, mediation analysis confirmed that consumers' attitudes toward the brand partially mediate the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention, indicating that positive attitudes play a crucial role in the purchase decision-making process. This suggests that marketing strategies focused solely on increasing influencer visibility will not be effective unless they also contribute to the creation and reinforcement of positive brand attitudes. Accordingly, developing and maintaining a strong, positive brand attitude through carefully se-

Figure 1: Proposed research model



Source: Authors

lected influencers who align with the brand’s values and image represents one of the key success factors in contemporary digital marketing. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Consumers’ attitudes toward the brand mediate the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumers’ purchase intention.

The following section presents the research model with the defined hypotheses, which will be tested within this study.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of examining the relationship between influencers and consumers, with a focus on the impact that influencers have on consumers and their attitudes toward a brand, a questionnaire was developed containing statements related to influencers, influencer characteristics, and purchase intention (Table 1). Respondents indicated their level of agreement with the given statements using a five-point Likert scale.

The data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS

Statistics). The survey was conducted in the cities of Arandelovac, Kragujevac, and Lazarevac in the period from June 20 to July 10, 2025. This research included 304 respondents who completed the questionnaire, which is provided in the appendix, via the Internet (Table 2).

Based on the sample structure presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that out of a total of 304 surveyed respondents, 153 (50.3%) are male, while a slightly smaller percentage are female, with 151 respondents (49.7%). The largest number of respondents belongs to the age group of 18 to 25 years (50.7%), and most of them have higher education, totaling 205 respondents (67.4%). Furthermore, employed respondents dominate the observed sample, numbering 228 (75.0%). Accordingly, the majority of respondents (62.2%) have a monthly income of 80.000 dinars or more.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis of the collected data was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics). Descriptive statistical analysis (arithmetic mean and standard deviation), reliability analysis, correlation analysis, as well as regression analysis were used.

Table 1: Statements based on a review of the literature

STATEMENT	VARIABLE	SOURCE
Influencers are honest.	INFLUENCER ATTRACTIVENESS	Ki et al. (2022); Singh & Banerjee (2018)
Influencers are attractive.		
Influencers are charming.		
Influencers' content on social media is visually appealing.		
Influencers are humble.		
I believe that the influencer has a lot of knowledge about this brand.	INFLUENCER EXPERTISE	Phichhang et al. (2024); Opris et al. (2020)
I believe that a brand endorsed by a trustworthy celebrity/influencer is more reputable and desirable.		
Influencers are a guarantee of the quality of the products they recommend.		
Products recommended by influencers have higher quality.	INFLUENCER TRUSTWORTHINESS	Phichhang et al. (2024); Singh & Banerjee (2018)
I believe that influencers provide a reliable source of information.		
Influencers are not involved in controversial situations.		
You trust the brand choice of a celebrity/influencer.	PRODUCT ENDORSEMENT	Opris et al. (2020)
Products endorsed by influencers are more valued by my reference group.		
I have a better social status if I use products endorsed by well-known influencers.		
I like certain products simply because they are used by famous influencers.		
Products endorsed by influencers are luxury products.		
Products recommended by influencers have a better image within my social group.	ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND	Singh & Banerjee (2018); Phichhang et al. (2024)
I believe that the brand promoted by the influencer is very good.		
I believe that the brand promoted by the influencer is very useful.		
My attitude toward the brand promoted by the influencer is positive.	INFLUENCER-BRAND CONGRUENCE	Lim et al. (2017); Phichhang et al. (2024)
I believe that this brand is perfectly suitable for the influencer who represents it.		
I believe that the influencer representing this brand is trustworthy.		
The influencer perfectly fits the brand.	PURCHASE INTENTION	Lim et al. (2017); Opris et al. (2020); Singh & Banerjee (2018)
The appearance of a celebrity in an advertisement influences your purchase decision.		
I want to buy a product promoted by an influencer I admire.		
I buy a brand promoted by an influencer I admire if I like the product.		
I believe that I have a better social status if I buy products recommended by influencers.		
I will buy a product if it is recommended by a celebrity.		
I would buy a product if influencers I like start endorsing it.		
I show interest in the brand, but I need more information.		

Source: Authors

Based on the data presented in Table 3, it can be concluded that respondents express the highest level of agreement with the statement that influencers are humble, as this statement recorded the highest mean value ($M = 3.91$). This result indicates the most favor-

able attitude of respondents within the analyzed statements. In contrast, the least favorable attitude was recorded for the statement that respondents like certain products solely because they are used by famous influencers, with the lowest average rating ($M = 2.75$).

Table 2: Sample structure

QUESTION	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
GENDER	Female	49,70%
	Male	50,30%
AGE	18-25	50,70%
	26-35	32,20%
	36+	17,1%
EDUCATION	Primary education	1,00%
	Secondary education	31,60%
	Higher education	67,40%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	Employed	75,00%
	Unemployed	3,90%
	Student	21,10%
MONTHLY INCOME LEVEL	Up to 30.000 RSD	13,80%
	30.000 - 55.000 RSD	6,60%
	55.000 - 80.000 RSD	17,4%
	80.000 and more	62,2%

Source: Authors

Table 3: Results of descriptive statistical analysis

STATEMENTS	Mean	Standard deviation
Influencers are honest.	3,1776	1,37446
Influencers are attractive.	3,8388	1,01653
Influencers are charming.	3,6020	1,18132
Influencers' content on social media is visually appealing.	2,9211	1,46703
Influencers are humble.	3,9112	1,16126
I believe that the influencer has extensive knowledge about this brand.	3,1776	1,33301
I believe that a brand endorsed by a trustworthy celebrity/influencer is more reputable and desirable.	3,4178	1,29984
Influencers are a guarantee of the quality of the products they recommend.	2,8191	1,51891
Products recommended by influencers have higher quality.	2,8553	1,47323
I believe that influencers provide a reliable source of information.	3,0263	1,37372
Influencers are not involved in controversial situations.	3,0230	1,43832
You trust the brand choice of a celebrity/influencer.	3,1053	1,34806
Products endorsed by influencers are more valued by my reference group.	3,1118	1,35972
I have a better social status if I use products endorsed by well-known influencers.	2,8454	1,54550
I like certain products simply because they are used by famous influencers.	2,7533	1,58009
Products endorsed by influencers are luxury products.	3,1645	1,44626
Products recommended by influencers have a better image within my social group.	3,0197	1,44866
I believe that the brand promoted by the influencer is very good.	3,0658	1,37958
I believe that the brand promoted by the influencer is very useful.	3,1546	1,33218
My attitude toward the brand promoted by the influencer is positive.	3,2697	1,27412
I believe that this brand is perfectly suitable for the influencer who represents it.	3,2105	1,34548
I believe that the influencer representing this brand is trustworthy.	3,2533	1,38771
The influencer perfectly fits the brand.	3,3388	1,33016
The appearance of a celebrity in an advertisement influences your purchase decision.	3,1645	1,44398
I want to buy a product promoted by an influencer I admire.	3,0888	1,46983
I buy a brand promoted by an influencer I admire if I like the product.	3,4671	1,39975
I believe that I have a better social status if I buy products recommended by influencers.	2,8520	1,57155
I will buy a product if it is recommended by a celebrity.	2,9145	1,51099
I would buy a product if influencers I like start endorsing it.	3,0132	1,47805
I show interest in the brand, but I need more information.	3,5263	1,31980

Source: Authors

Regarding the homogeneity of attitudes, it is most pronounced in the statement related to the attractiveness of influencers, which shows the lowest standard deviation value (SD = 1.02), indicating a high level of agreement among respondents. The greatest difference in opinions (highest heterogeneity) was recorded for the statement that consumers like products used by famous influencers, confirmed by the highest standard deviation value (SD = 1.58). A similar level of variability in attitudes is present in the statement that respondents believe they gain higher social status by purchasing products recommended by influencers (SD = 1.57).

All statements are grouped into specific factors (influencer attractiveness, influencer expertise, influencer trustworthiness, product endorsement, attitude towards the brand, influencer-brand alignment, and purchase intention), and a reliability analysis was conducted, with the data presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Reliability analysis – Cronbach’s alpha coefficient values

FACTOR	Cronbach’s alpha
Influencer attractiveness	0,873
Influencer expertise	0,909
Influencer trustworthiness	0,900
Product endorsement	0,938
Attitude toward the brand	0,922
Brand-influencer congruence	0,928
Purchase intention	0,921

Source: Authors

Based on Table 4, it can be observed that there is an adequate level of reliability for all derived factors, which allows for further analysis.

Correlation analysis determined that there is a statistically significant strong positive linear correlation between all pairs of factors, as evidenced by Pearson correlation coefficients and all these values are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Based on the results presented in Table 5, it can be observed that there are statistically significant positive correlations between all examined factors at a significance level of $p < 0.01$ (**), indicating strong interrelationships among the observed variables. The highest correlation was recorded between influencer - brand alignment and purchase intention ($r = 0.890$), suggesting that a higher degree of perceived alignment between the influencer and the brand contributes to greater consumer willingness to take specific purchase-related actions. A very strong correlation is also present between brand alignment and product endorsement ($r = 0.869$), as well as between attitudes towards the brand and alignment ($r = 0.866$), indicating that the perception of consistency between the influencer and the brand positively affects both the general attitude toward the brand and the perception that the influencer genuinely supports the promoted product.

High correlation values are also present between influencer expertise and all other variables. For example, expertise is strongly related to reliability ($r = 0.855$), product endorsement ($r = 0.834$), and attitudes towards the brand ($r = 0.840$), highlighting the importance of perceived influencer competence in shaping positive consumer effects. Influencer attractiveness, although slightly lower compared to other relationships, still shows a significant association with all variables, including purchase intention ($r = 0.779$), confirming that physical attractiveness and presenta-

Table 5: Correlation analysis

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	1	0.838**	0.794**	0.769**	0.794**	0.784**	0.779**
2	0.838	1	0.855**	0.834**	0.840**	0.844**	0.828**
3	0.794**	0.855**	1	0.869**	0.849**	0.862**	0.850**
4	0.769**	0.834**	0.869**	1	0.854**	0.869**	0.869**
5	0.794**	0.840**	0.849**	0.854**	1	0.866**	0.849**
6	0,784**	0,844**	0,862**	0,869**	0,866**	1	0,890**
7	0,779**	0,828**	0,850**	0,869**	0,849**	0,890**	1

** The correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level

- 1 - Influencer attractiveness; 2 - Influencer expertise
- 3 - Influencer trustworthiness; 4 - Product endorsement
- 5 - Attitude toward the brand; 6 - Brand-influencer congruence
- 7 - Purchase intention

Source: Authors

Table 6: Results of the regression analysis

	β	t	p	Collinearity statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Influencer attractiveness	0,138	2,857	0,005	0,269	3,711
Influencer expertise	0,186	3,155	0,002	0,183	5,475
Influencer trustworthiness	0,241	4,227	0	0,195	5,14
Brand–influencer congruence	0,393	7,14	0	0,209	4,78

Dependent variable: Attitude toward the brand

$R^2 = 0.811$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.808$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Authors

tion play a relevant role in shaping consumer attitudes and intentions.

To test the effects of four independent variables (influencer attractiveness, influencer expertise, influencer trustworthiness, influencer–brand congruence) on consumers’ attitudes toward the brand (dependent variable), multiple regression analysis was applied. Based on the multiple regression analysis, certain hypotheses can be confirmed or rejected. First, multicollinearity was examined using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) coefficients, which indicated that it is not a concern. Accordingly, multiple regression analysis can be conducted. Additionally, the assumption of residual normality was tested using the P-P plot, where the points show a slight deviation, being on or near the diagonal, indicating an approximately normal distribution. In addition to the P-P plot, the residual histogram confirms an approximately normal distribution, as the bar layout is symmetrical and without pronounced deviations.

The multiple regression model demonstrates a very good fit to the data, which is confirmed by the coefficient of determination (R Square) value of 0.811. This indicates that the independent variables in the model explain 81.1% of the variance in the dependent variable, namely attitude toward the brand. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.808 further confirms the stability of the model by taking into account the number of predictors included.

Based on the values of the beta coefficients (Table 6), it can be concluded which independent variable has the greatest impact on attitude toward the brand. All independent variables - attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and congruence, show a statistically significant impact on attitude toward the brand at the significance level of $p < 0.01$. Among them, the variable congruence has the strongest influence on attitude toward the brand, as confirmed by the highest beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.393$; $p = 0.000$), while attractiveness has the weakest, yet still statistically significant

influence ($\beta = 0.138$; $p = 0.005$). The multiple regression analysis confirmed that all observed independent variables (influencer attractiveness, influencer expertise, influencer trustworthiness, and influencer–brand congruence) have a statistically significant effect on consumers’ attitudes toward the brand, thereby confirming the first four hypotheses of the study.

In order to confirm or reject Hypothesis H5: Product endorsement by influencers has a statistically significant effect on consumers’ purchase intention, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted.

Table 7: Results of the simple regression analysis

	β	t	p
Product endorsement	0,869	30,589	0,000

Dependent variable: Purchase intention

$R^2 = 0.757$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.755$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Authors

The results of the simple regression analysis show a strong and statistically significant positive effect, with a standardized β coefficient (0.869, $p < 0.001$), meaning that product endorsement is a meaningful predictor of consumers’ purchase intention. The model explains a substantial proportion of the variance in purchase intention, as indicated by $R^2 = 0.757$ and Adjusted $R^2 = 0.755$. Therefore, hypothesis H5 is confirmed.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which influencer attractiveness affects consumer behavior, a mediation regression analysis was conducted, with consumer attitude included as a mediator. This allows for the assessment of the indirect effect of attractiveness through attitude, showing whether and to what extent consumer attitudes mediate the relationship between an attractive influencer and purchase intention. The results provide a more precise insight into the mechanisms of influencer impact and help in designing more effective marketing strategies and enhancing influence.

Table 8: Mediation analysis results – mediator: consumers' attitude toward the brand

Model	Relationship	β	T	p	R ²
1	Attractiveness - Purchase intention	0,779	21,618	<0,001	0,607
2	Attractiveness - Consumers' attitude	0,794	22,67	<0,001	0,63
3	Consumers' attitude - Purchase intention	0,623	13,187	<0,001	0,751
4	Attractiveness - Purchase intention (direct)	0,285	6,027	<0,001	

Source: Authors

The first regression analysis examined the direct impact of influencer attractiveness on purchase intention. The results showed that attractiveness has a strong and significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.779$, $t = 21.618$, $p < 0.001$), with the model explaining approximately 60.7% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = 0.607$). This means that the more consumers perceive an influencer as attractive, the higher their intention to purchase the product promoted by the influencer.

The second regression examined how influencer attractiveness affects consumers' attitudes toward the brand. It was observed that there is a very strong and statistically significant positive effect of attractiveness on attitude ($\beta = 0.794$, $t = 22.670$, $p < 0.001$), with the model explaining 63.0% of the variance in attitude ($R^2 = 0.630$). This indicates that attractive influencers shape more positive consumer attitudes toward the brand, which is a key assumption for the mediation model.

The third regression included consumer attitude as a mediator in the model, along with the direct effect of attractiveness on purchase intention. The results show that consumer attitude has a strong and significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.623$, $t = 13.187$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that positive attitudes toward the brand increase willingness to purchase. The direct effect of attractiveness on purchase intention remains significant but is smaller than in the first regression ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 6.027$, $p < 0.001$). The decrease in the beta coefficient for attractiveness in the presence of attitude indicates that part of the effect of attractiveness on purchase intention is transmitted through attitude, i.e., attitude partially mediates this relationship.

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that consumer attitude toward the brand partially mediates the relationship between influencer attractiveness and purchase intention. This means that influencer attractiveness not only has a direct effect on purchase intention but also an indirect effect by shaping consumers' attitudes, which then influence their purchase intention. Partial mediation occurs when

the direct effect remains significant but is reduced after including the mediator. This analysis confirms the importance of attitude as a mechanism through which perceptions of influencer attractiveness influence consumer behavior, which is crucial for marketing and social media promotion strategies. Managers should consider not only the selection of attractive influencers but also how these influencers can positively shape target audience attitudes to enhance purchase intention.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results show that respondents value influencer modesty the most, which aligns with the findings of Ki et al. (2022) regarding the importance of authenticity for building trust. The weakest attitude was expressed toward the statement that consumers purchase products solely because of the influencer, indicating a more complex consumer relationship with promotions (Opris et al., 2020). The highest agreement was observed regarding influencer attractiveness, while attitudes toward purchase motives and social status acquisition varied more, confirming the diversity of consumer motives (Lim et al., 2017).

The results indicate strong and statistically significant positive correlations between all examined variables, with the relationship between brand–influencer alignment and purchase intention standing out, suggesting that the perception of alignment plays a key role in shaping consumer intentions. High correlations also highlight the need for careful interpretation due to potential multicollinearity in further analyses.

Consistent with the study by Phichhang et al. (2024), which showed that alignment between a brand and a celebrity significantly affects consumers' attitudes toward the brand, the results of this research confirm that the perception of alignment (congruence) between the influencer and the brand has the strongest impact on forming consumer attitudes. Thus, Hypothesis H1: Brand-influencer congruence has a statistically significant effect on consumers' at-

titudes toward the brand, is confirmed. This finding is further consistent with the theoretical framework derived from the studies of Kahle and Homer (1985) as well as Kamins and Gupta (1994), which confirm that high alignment increases promotional effectiveness and positive consumer attitudes.

The study results show that alignment between the influencer and the brand has the strongest impact on consumers' brand attitudes, confirming the importance of perceptual coherence between the influencer's persona and brand values. This finding aligns with the match-up hypothesis developed by Kahle and Homer (1985) and further supported by Kamins and Gupta (1994) and Kim and Na (2007). High perceived alignment contributes to message credibility and greater brand acceptance among consumers, which this study confirms as central in shaping positive attitudes.

Influencer expertise also had a significant impact on shaping consumer attitudes. Accordingly, Hypothesis H2: Influencer expertise has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand, is confirmed. This result supports the findings of studies emphasizing the importance of perceived competence as a dimension of credibility (Ohanian, 1990; Singh & Banerjee, 2018). Expert influencers are perceived as reliable sources of information, further reinforcing trust in their recommendations and the brand itself.

Influencer attractiveness, although associated with a slightly lower beta coefficient, still shows a statistically significant effect on consumer attitudes. Thus, Hypothesis H3: The attractiveness of an influencer promoting a brand has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand, is confirmed. This dimension of influence is frequently emphasized in the literature (Lim et al., 2017; Jin & Phua, 2014), particularly on visual platforms such as Instagram, where physical attractiveness and aesthetic identity play an important role in brand perception.

The study results also confirmed Hypothesis H4: Influencer trustworthiness has a statistically significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward the brand. This finding is consistent with theoretical trust models in the context of communication (Mayer et al., 1995; Gefen et al., 2003) and more recent research in influencer marketing (Phichhang et al., 2024), which highlights that consumers rely on credible recommendations in environments saturated with advertising messages.

Additionally, a strong and statistically significant effect of product endorsement by the influencer on purchase intention was observed. Thus, Hypothesis

H5: Influencer product endorsement has a statistically significant effect on consumers' purchase intention, is confirmed.

These results suggest that the perception of authentic and convincing support provided by the influencer for a specific product can directly motivate consumers to consider or make a purchase. These findings are consistent with previous research confirming the role of identification with the influencer and the perception of their engagement in shaping behavioral outcomes (Casaló et al., 2020; Opris et al., 2020; Ki et al., 2022).

Regarding the mechanism through which influencer attractiveness affects consumers' purchase intentions, the mediation analysis results showed that consumer attitude toward the brand partially mediates this relationship. Accordingly, Hypothesis H6: Consumer attitude toward the brand mediates the relationship between influencer attractiveness and consumers' purchase intentions (Lim et al., 2017), is partially confirmed. Attractiveness directly affects purchase intention, but when attitude is included as a mediator in the model, the effect of attractiveness decreases, while the impact of attitude is strong. These results confirm partial mediation and support the earlier findings of Lim et al. (2017), according to which attractive influencers not only capture attention but also shape attitudes through positive emotional and cognitive responses, which in turn stimulate purchase intention.

The structure of the relationship suggests that attractiveness alone can initiate interest, but forming a positive attitude is crucial for transforming that initial perception into concrete purchase intention. These results have significant implications for marketing practice: attractiveness can serve as an initial trigger, but long-term effects on behavior depend on the influencer's ability to shape positive attitudes toward the brand.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it has been confirmed that influencer characteristics, particularly brand-influencer alignment, expertise, reliability, and attractiveness, significantly influence the formation of consumers' attitudes toward the brand, which is consistent with the findings of Lim et al. (2017) and Phichhang et al. (2024). It is especially highlighted that alignment between the influencer and the brand has the strongest impact on consumer attitudes,

confirming the importance of strategic compatibility in the promotion process. Furthermore, product endorsement by the influencer directly and strongly affects consumer behavior, indicating the key role of influencers in stimulating purchase intention.

One significant conclusion is that consumer attitude toward the brand partially mediates the effect of influencer attractiveness on purchase intention, which confirms the complex nature of consumer decision-making and highlights the importance of shaping positive attitudes as a mediating mechanism (Lim et al., 2017). This confirms the proposition that influencer attractiveness alone is insufficient; it must influence consumers' emotional and cognitive relationship with the brand to achieve an effect on behavior.

This study contributes to consumer behavior theory and influencer marketing by confirming that influencer attributes: attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and brand–influencer congruence, significantly shape consumers' attitudes toward the brand. Furthermore, the research shows that consumer attitudes partially mediate the effect of influencer attractiveness on purchase intention, providing empirical evidence of the complex mechanisms linking perceptions of influencers to consumer behavior. This extends existing theoretical models by integrating source credibility dimensions and the concept of brand–influencer.

This research has significant practical implications for companies utilizing influencer marketing in digital environments. The findings provide clear, actionable guidance for marketing professionals and brand managers on how different influencer characteristics impact brand perception and consumer behavior, enabling more informed decision-making in campaign design. Empirical results show that influencer expertise, trustworthiness, and authenticity have a greater effect on consumer attitudes and purchase intention than mere popularity or follower count, highlighting the importance of careful partner selection. The alignment between a brand's identity and values and the influencer's persona is particularly critical, serving as a key criterion for strategic decision-making and

shaping positive consumer attitudes. The results also emphasize the importance of developing long-term partnerships with influencers, as these foster greater trust and audience loyalty. Additionally, segmenting consumers based on demographic and digital characteristics can enhance targeting and campaign optimization, enabling more effective communication strategies, strengthening brand perception, and increasing consumer engagement in the digital space. These findings provide practical tools and guidelines for professionals to design effective, measurable, and sustainable digital marketing strategies.

The study is limited to a sample of respondents from a specific geographic area, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The use of self-report measures in surveys may be subject to social desirability bias and other forms of response bias, while focusing on a limited number of influencer characteristics does not cover all factors that may affect consumer behavior. Moreover, the study did not focus on a specific brand but analyzed general consumer perceptions, which limits understanding of specific effects in the context of individual brands. Although the sample included both genders, a detailed analysis of gender differences in perceptions and responses to influencers was not conducted, representing an additional direction for future research.

Future research can further explore this topic through comparative analyses of different types of influencers (micro and macro) and by examining effects in various cultural and market contexts to identify potential variations in perception and influencer marketing effectiveness. Longitudinal approaches are also recommended to track the long-term effects of influencers on consumer attitudes, behavior, and loyalty. Additionally, using objective indicators (actual purchases, clicks, engagement metrics) can enhance the validity of the findings. Special attention could be given to the role of individual differences among consumers (gender, age, digital literacy, susceptibility to influencers) as well as to mediating and moderating variables that shape the effect of influencers on consumer behavior.

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Apstrakt

Uticaj karakteristika influensera na stav prema brendu i nameru kupovine: medijatorski efekat stavova potrošača

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Potrošači kao društvena bića podložni su uticajima iz svoje okoline, među kojima značajnu ulogu imaju referentne grupe. Razvoj interneta i društvenih mreža doveo je do promene u obrascima ponašanja potrošača, pri čemu influenseri postaju ključni akteri u oblikovanju stavova potrošača i njihovih namera. Predmet istraživanja je ispitivanje uticaja ključnih karakteristika influensera, tj. atraktivnosti, stručnosti, poverenja, podrške proizvodu i njihove usklađenosti sa brendom, na stavove i namere potrošača. Poseban fokus je na medijacijskoj ulozi stava potrošača prema brendu u odnosu između atraktivnosti influensera i kupovne namere. Ovaj pristup omogućava sagledavanje direktnih i posrednih efekata influensera na ponašanje potrošača. Cilj istraživanja je utvrditi kako perceptivne karakteristike in-

fluensera utiču na stavove potrošača prema brendu i u kojoj meri njihova javna podrška proizvodima doprinosi oblikovanju potrošačkog ponašanja u procesu donošenja odluka o kupovini. Istraživanje je sprovedeno primenom kvantitativne metodologije, korišćenjem anketnog upitnika na prigodnom uzorku od 304 ispitanika. Doprinos rada ogleda se u boljem razumevanju uticaja influensera na ponašanje potrošača i pružanju praktičnih smernica za digitalni marketing, posebno u pogledu strateškog odabira influensera za kampanje.

Ključne reči: referentne grupe, influenseri, stav prema brendu, kupovne namere

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Perceived service quality and student satisfaction in higher education: A SERVQUAL-based study

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Abstract: The paper investigates the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction in higher education by using the SERVQUAL model. Data was collected from the students at Serbian universities. In order to investigate the influence of students' expectations, perceptions, and the gap between them (perceived service quality) on student satisfaction, three regression analyses were conducted. The obtained results showed that students' perceptions of their experience and perceived service quality are more significant predictors of student satisfaction than students' expectations if taken alone. From all SERVQUAL dimensions, only tangibles, empathy, and assurance were proven to be key drivers of student satisfaction. On the other hand, responsiveness turns out with no significant impact on students' satisfaction. Findings from the study highlight the importance of harmonization of service delivery and students' perceptions at the higher education institutions in order to attain higher levels of student satisfaction. These institutions may work on improving their tangible infrastructure, emotional support by the staff, as well institutional trust. Results from this research may contribute to discussions on quality assurance in higher education, as well may offer practical insights regarding service quality improvements in higher education institutions.

Keywords: *student satisfaction, SERVQUAL, higher education, expectations, perceptions, quality gap*

JEL Classification: *M3, I2*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education have become highly student-centered and also very competitive in recent decades. Therefore, service quality at universities comes to the forefront. Gone are the days when institutions were evaluated solely on the basis of their academic programs. Nowadays, they are also judged on their ability to meet students' expectations. The ease with which institutions understand students' perceptions of service quality may be essential to improving their performance. This creates a challenge for higher education institutions - how to systematically identify which aspects of service quality strongly influence student satisfaction and, consequently, institutional competitiveness and sustainability.

SERVQUAL was initially developed to evaluate service quality in commercial sectors. Over the last few decades, this framework has been adopted by various HE institutions to measure the discrepancy between students' expectations and perceptions. Despite critics who question its relevance to education and its focus on consumers, SERVQUAL remains a valuable and adaptable method for identifying institutional shortcomings. However, previous studies that applied SERVQUAL in higher education have produced inconsistent results regarding the relative importance of individual service quality dimensions. Also, empirical evidence from transition economies, such as Serbia, remains limited so far, which limits the generalizability of existing findings and their practical applicability in different institutional contexts.

The present study has used the SERVQUAL framework in the Serbian higher education context to analyze the impact of service quality on student satisfaction, and provides the theoretical framework, as well as practical recommendations for universities. This research aims to examine the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction by analyzing students' expectations, perceptions, and the gap between them (perceived service quality), across the five SERVQUAL dimensions. The motivation for this study arose from addressing the context-specific

evidence and clarifying whether student satisfaction is more driven by expectations, actual experiences, or perceived service quality.

This study differs from previous research in three key ways. Firstly, it focuses on the Serbian higher education system, which has been less researched in prior studies. Secondly, it used three models to compare the explanatory power of expectations, perceptions, and perceived service quality, rather than relying on a single aggregated approach. Lastly, it provided empirical evidence on the relative importance of SERVQUAL dimensions, highlighting dimensions that do not significantly influence satisfaction, offering guidance for quality improvements in higher education institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The SERVQUAL model was first created to measure service quality in commercial settings, but over the past decades, it has also been widely used in higher education around the world. It assesses service quality by comparing what students expect with what they actually experience.

Using SERVQUAL in different educational contexts shows both its practical value and its limitations. Many studies have shown that SERVQUAL is effective in finding and correcting quality issues (Đonlagić & Fazlić, 2015; Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Galeeva, 2016; Goumairi et al., 2020; Sahney et al., 2004; Shekarchizadeh et al., 2011; Tan & Kek, 2004; Van Antwerpen & Van Schalkwyk, 2024; Yousapronpaiboon, 2014). Still, some critics argue that treating students like customers can threaten academic integrity (Gupta & Kaushik, 2018; Manunggal & Afriadi, 2023; Rolo et al., 2023; Sultan & Wong, 2011). To address these problems and account for contemporary challenges, some authors are expanding the model to include digital service metrics and sustainability criteria, while also considering the specific requirements of education systems (Delgado et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022; Mathew & Cherian, 2025; Ozdemir et al., 2020; Pan, 2025). Even with its critics, SERVQUAL is still a key tool for higher education institutions working to improve service quality.

The SERVQUAL model is the most widely used tool for measuring service quality in higher education. It evaluates the gap between students' expectations and their actual experiences across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions enable institutions

to identify areas for improvement to enhance student satisfaction and overall service quality (Hoque et al., 2023; Mathew & Cherian, 2025).

Tangibles refer to the physical and digital tangible elements of higher education institutions. It includes classrooms, laboratories, equipment, and the institution's online presence (Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Goumairi et al., 2020; Mathew & Cherian, 2025; Pan, 2025).

Reliability refers to the ability of faculty members to provide accurate and reliable services from the outset and continuously (Hoque et al., 2023; Utkirov, 2024).

Responsiveness measures the willingness of staff members to provide timely support to students, which includes administrative responsibilities as well as faculty assistance (Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Khan et al., 2021).

Assurance encompasses the competence, friendliness, and credibility of faculty staff, which influence student trust and confidence (Arthur et al., 2022; Hoque et al., 2023).

Empathy refers to the personalized attention and care shown to students, taking into account their individual academic needs (Goumairi et al., 2020; Mathew & Cherian, 2025).

Previous research highlighted several recurring insights. On the one hand, some researchers (Alemu, 2023; Suting et al., 2020) argue that tangibles and reliability have the most significant gaps between students' expectations and perceptions of service quality, pointing out that HEI infrastructures and staff consistency may be the key areas which requiring urgent institutional attention. Another group of researchers (Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Khan et al., 2021) had different results, in which assurance and responsiveness were identified as the strongest predictors of student satisfaction.

Also, some dimensions were often shown to vary across cultures, such as empathy. This SERVQUAL dimension appears to be very difficult to measure consistently across educational settings and cultures (Hoque et al., 2023). Even though, all five SERVQUAL dimensions offer a powerful analytical lens for quality assessment in higher education institutions. Some researchers (Mbise & Tuninga, 2016; Sahin et al., 2024) also confirm the relevance of these dimensions, and in the same time point out the need for modifications in order to reflect technological advancements regarding student expectations.

A substantial body of research confirms that all five SERVQUAL dimensions—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—are significantly and positively associated with student satisfac-

tion in higher education contexts (Abu-Rumman & Qawasmeh, 2022; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Magasi et al., 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Rashid. et al., 2021; Rodić Lukić & Lukić, 2020; Thapa, 2022). The relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction has been investigated across institutions and countries. All of them indicate that students' evaluations of educational services extend beyond academic instruction to encompass the entire service environment (Athiyaman, 1997; Dado et al., 2012; Hasan et al., 2008; Helgesen & Nettet, 2007; Malik et al., 2010; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2009).

Empirical studies (Hasan et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2021; Sibai et al., 2021) consistently indicated that, although all dimensions contribute to overall satisfaction, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are the most influential predictors. These dimensions capture students' perceptions of consistent, dependable services, timely assistance, professional competence, and individualized support from both academic and administrative staff. For example, Hasan et al. (2008) found that assurance and empathy were the two strongest determinants of satisfaction among Malaysian students, while Dado et al. (2012) confirmed that perceived service quality has a direct positive effect on satisfaction, which subsequently influences students' behavioral intentions such as loyalty and positive word-of-mouth communication.

Also, previous research (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007) implied that satisfaction positively affects institutional reputation and student loyalty. Athiyaman (1997) reported that there is a reciprocal relationship between perceived quality and satisfaction. While satisfaction shapes perceptions of quality, perceived quality also reinforces positive behavioral intentions. Other studies have highlighted the role of emotional and relational factors in shaping satisfaction (Rojas-Méndez et al., 2009), and have shown that service quality and satisfaction enhance trust and commitment, which ultimately drive student loyalty.

When taking into account the tangibles (physical facilities, technological infrastructure, and the general learning environment), they tend to exert a moderate yet statistically significant effect on satisfaction (Hanaysha et al., 2011; Malik et al., 2010). One study (Malik et al., 2010) indicates that both high-quality teaching environments and modern learning facilities can significantly contribute to student satisfaction. This is highlighted chiefly in the contexts where academic interaction and the physical setting are central to learning effectiveness. The strength of these correlations, however, may vary across contexts.

Assurance was found to have the strongest predictive power of student satisfaction in settings where faculty expertise and institutional trust play important role for the participants (Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Seitova et al., 2024). Although there are many contextual variations, consensus across studies remains that all SERVQUAL dimensions collectively shape the student experience, influencing both satisfaction and loyalty outcomes (Dado et al., 2012; Helgesen & Nettet, 2007; Khan et al., 2021).

Findings from the previous research consistently demonstrate that perceived service quality represents a strong predictor of student satisfaction in higher education. This highlights the need for universities to adopt a comprehensive approach to quality management—one that goes beyond improving physical facilities to also strengthen relational, emotional, and trust-centered aspects of service delivery. By addressing all facets of the student experience, institutions can effectively enhance satisfaction, promote engagement, and encourage lasting loyalty among students.

In this research, the following hypotheses, based on the results of previous findings, were tested:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between expectation of service quality and student satisfaction.

H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between perception of service quality and student satisfaction.

H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived service quality dimensions and student satisfaction.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research objective

This study investigates the relationships among service quality, student satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the context of higher education. The research is based on the SERVQUAL model, which conceptualizes perceived service quality as the gap between students' expectations and perceptions across five key dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

The primary objective is to explore whether service quality dimensions are associated with student satisfaction.

3.2. Sample

Data for this study were collected by using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed online to students at higher education institutions in Serbia. A convenience sampling method was used, involving participants who were readily accessible and agreed to participate voluntarily in the study. While this non-probability sampling approach limits generalizability, it is appropriate for research focused on examining theoretical relationships among variables.

Participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. The online format allowed for extensive reach and efficient data collection within the intended timeframe. Prior to analysis, all responses were screened for completeness. Only fully completed questionnaires were included.

The research sample consisted of 445 students. The majority identified as female (76%), while 23.8% identified as male. Most respondents were in their second (52.6%) or third year (25.2%) of study, with smaller proportions from the first year (22.2%). Additionally, 9.9% were senior undergraduates, while 10.1% were enrolled in masters or doctoral programs. Academic performance was diverse, with the largest share reporting their grade point average 7.5 – 8.4 (40.7%), followed by 8.5 – 9.4 (28.6%). A smaller portion achieved a 9.5-10 (11.7%), while lower averages were less common. Regarding student status, 71% of respondents were full-time students, and 27% were employed while studying, indicating a balanced mix of academic engagement and professional activity within the sample.

3.3. Instrument

The modified SERVQUAL questionnaire was the primary instrument which is used in this research. It was adapted for the application in higher education set-

tings, following prior validated implementations (Al-emu, 2023; Al-Refaei et al., 2024; Bahadori et al., 2011; Dado et al., 2011; Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Goumairi et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Legčević, 2009; de Oliveira & Ferreira, 2009; Rodić Lukić & Lukić, 2020; Shekarchizadeh et al., 2011; Sultan & Wong, 2011; Utkirov, 2024). The instrument consisted of 48 items, divided equally into two parts: 24 items measuring students' expectations (E) regarding what a world-class faculty should provide, and 24 items measuring students' perceptions (P) of the actual service quality at their current institution.

Each expectation item had a corresponding perception item with identical wording but a different referent. Students were instructed to rate all items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The 48 items were mapped onto the original five SERVQUAL dimensions as shown in table 1.

The perceived service quality score (PSQ) was calculated by subtracting perceptions from expectations for each item ($PSQ = P - E$), and then aggregated across dimensions. All dimensions demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.84 to 0.96, indicating high measurement reliability.

In addition to the SERVQUAL scale, a second instrument was used to measure student satisfaction. It included 4 items also rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The satisfaction scale was developed following previous studies by Helgesen and Nasset (2007) and Rojas-Méndez et al. (2009). It comprised four items, assessing students' overall satisfaction, their positive perception of the faculty, perceived value of services received, and the extent to which their pre-enrollment expectations were fulfilled.

3.4. Data analysis procedures

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive

Table 1: SERVQUAL dimensions

Dimension	Items per section (E or P)	Description
Tangibles	8	Physical environment, infrastructure, digital presence, academic surroundings
Reliability	4	Consistency, dependability, accurate service delivery
Responsiveness	4	Timeliness, helpfulness, availability of academic and administrative staff
Assurance	4	Professionalism, competence, communication, and institutional trust
Empathy	4	Personalized attention, student understanding, and supportive academic culture

Source: Authors

statistics were first computed to examine the demographic profile of respondents and assess the distributional properties of key variables. Reliability of the measurement scales was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for internal consistency.

To test the study's hypotheses, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the relationships between service quality dimensions and outcome variable - student satisfaction. Separate regression models were constructed for:

- Expectation of service quality (E) - Students' expectations regarding service quality;
- Perceptions of service quality (P) - Students' perceptions of the actual service received;
- Perceived service quality (P-E) - Discrepancy between perceptions and expectations of service quality.

Regression diagnostics were conducted to verify assumptions of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, with $p < .01$ indicating strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from three separate multiple regression analyses conducted to explore the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction in higher education. Each analysis examined a different aspect of service quality as the predictor variable: first, expectations of service quality; then, perceptions of service quality; and lastly, perceived service quality (the gap between perception and expectation). In all three models, the dependent variable was student satisfaction, while the five SERVQUAL dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, served as the independent variables.

By structuring the analysis this way, the study aimed to identify which specific dimensions of service quality are most strongly associated with satisfaction, depending on whether students' expectations, actual experiences, or the discrepancy between the two were considered. This comparative research approach enables a deeper understanding of how different dimensions of service quality contribute to student satisfaction.

4.1. Model 1: Expectation of service quality → Student satisfaction

The first regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between expectation of service quality dimensions and student satisfaction. The overall model was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($F = 2.505$; $p = 0.030$), suggesting that students' expectations regarding service quality have a modest but meaningful influence on their satisfaction.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.028$) indicates that the five SERVQUAL expectation dimensions explain approximately 2.8% of the variance in student satisfaction, with a multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.167$) showing a weak but present linear relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable.

Among the five predictors, only reliability exhibited a statistically significant relationship with student satisfaction ($\beta = -0.137$, $p = 0.021$), with the effect in a negative direction. This unexpected finding may suggest that higher expectations for reliable service, if unmet, can lead to decreased satisfaction, possibly because students are disappointed when anticipated standards are not met. The remaining dimensions—tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—did not demonstrate significant predictive power in this model. These findings imply that students' expectations alone are a weak predictor of overall satisfaction unless they align with perceived or actual service delivery.

Table 2: Relationship between expectation of service quality and student satisfaction

R = .167		R² = .028		F-ratio = 2.505		Sig. F = 0.030*	
No.	Dimension	β	Part	t-value	Sig. t		
1.	Tangibles	.021	.017	.358	.720		
2.	Reliability	-.137	-.109	-2.312	.021*		
3.	Responsiveness	.035	.026	.547	.585		
4.	Assurance	-.090	-.067	-1.414	.158		
5.	Empathy	.001	.001	.021	.983		

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors

Based on this analysis, Hypothesis H1, which posits a relationship between expected service quality and student satisfaction, is partially supported: only one dimension (reliability) contributes significantly and even then in a negative direction.

4.2. Model 2: Perceptions of service quality → Student satisfaction

To examine how perceptions of service quality influences student satisfaction, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with the five SERVQUAL dimensions (as perceived by students) as independent variables. The results, summarized in Table 3, indicate that the model is statistically significant ($F = 144.213$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating a strong predictive relationship.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.623$) shows that approximately 62.3% of the variance in student satisfaction can be explained by the perceptions of service quality dimensions, with a multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.789$) suggesting a strong positive association between perceived quality and satisfaction. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.024 indicates no autocorrelation in the residuals, supporting the reliability of the regression results.

The perceptions of service quality scale comprised 24 items, distributed across five SERVQUAL dimensions, and demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.96). The student satisfaction scale, consisting of four items, also showed excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.94).

Among the predictors, tangibles ($\beta = 0.358$, $p < 0.001$), empathy ($\beta = 0.348$, $p < 0.001$), and assurance ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.014$) were statistically significant. These results suggest that the physical learning environment, staff attentiveness and understanding, and the professionalism and trustworthiness of institutional staff are the most influential factors driving student satisfaction. Meanwhile, reliability and responsiveness did not significantly predict satisfaction in this model.

Based on these findings, Hypothesis H2, which posits a positive relationship between perceptions of service quality and student satisfaction, is strongly supported. The results reinforce the importance of delivering high-quality educational services that not only meet but exceed students' expectations in tangible and relational aspects.

4.3. Model 3: Perceived service quality (Gap score) → Student satisfaction

A third regression model was conducted to evaluate the relationship between perceived service quality, defined as the gap between students' perceptions and expectations ($P - E$), and their overall satisfaction. The five SERVQUAL gap dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) were used as independent variables, while student satisfaction served as the dependent variable.

As shown in Table 4, the model is statistically significant ($F = 118.263$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that perceived service quality significantly predicts student satisfaction. The model explains 57.5% of the variance in student satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.575$, $R = 0.758$), indicating a strong positive relationship. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.985 suggests that residuals are independent, meeting a key regression assumption.

The perceived service quality scale was constructed from 24 gap scores, calculated as the difference between students' perceptions and expectations ($P - E$), and organized according to the five SERVQUAL dimensions. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96, while the student satisfaction scale also showed high reliability ($\alpha = 0.94$).

The regression analysis revealed that four of the five perceived service quality dimensions significantly influenced student satisfaction. Tangibles, empathy, assurance, and reliability showed positive and statistically significant relationships with satisfaction, indicating that improvements in these areas, such as the

Table 3: Relationship between perceptions of service quality and student satisfaction

R = 0.789		R² = 0.623		F-ratio = 144.213		Sig. F = 0.000**	
No.	Dimension	β	Part	t-value	Sig. t		
1.	Tangibles	0.358	0.229	7.803	0.000**		
2.	Reliability	0.079	0.043	1.453	0.147		
3.	Responsiveness	-0.060	-0.031	-1.042	0.298		
4.	Assurance	0.141	0.073	2.472	0.014*		
5.	Empathy	0.348	0.174	5.925	0.000**		

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors

Table 4: Relationship between perceived service quality and student satisfaction

R = 0.758		R² = 0.575		F-ratio = 118.263		Sig. F = 0.000**	
No.	Dimension	β	Part	t-value	Sig. t		
1.	Tangibles	0.283	0.186	5.964	0.000**		
2.	Reliability	0.156	0.087	2.792	0.005**		
3.	Responsiveness	-0.068	-0.035	-1.120	0.263		
4.	Assurance	0.169	0.089	2.845	0.005**		
5.	Empathy	0.302	0.157	5.027	0.000**		

Note: **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05

Source: Authors

quality of physical facilities, personalized support, trust in staff and consistency of service, are likely to enhance the overall student experience. In contrast, the responsiveness dimension did not significantly predict satisfaction within this model.

These findings provide strong support for Hypothesis H3, confirming that perceived service quality is a significant predictor of student satisfaction. They also underscore the importance of reducing the gap between expectations and actual experiences across multiple service dimensions to foster greater satisfaction in higher education settings.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insights into the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction within the framework of the SERVQUAL model. While existing literature has consistently confirmed a positive association between the five SERVQUAL dimensions and student satisfaction in higher education (Abu-Rumman & Qawasmeh, 2022; Al-Alak & Alnaser, 2012; Fuchs & Fangpong, 2021; Magasi et al., 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2023; Rashid et al., 2021; Rodić Lukić & Lukić, 2020; Thapa, 2022) this study reveals that the strength and nature of these associations are contingent upon whether expectations, perceptions, or the gap between them are considered.

In line with past research (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007; Dado et al., 2012), perceived service quality emerged as the strongest predictor of student satisfaction, explaining over 62% of the variance. These findings strongly supported Hypothesis H2, which assumes a positive relation between perceptions of service quality and student satisfaction. Of all dimensions, tangibles, empathy, and assurance have a statistically significant influence on student satisfaction. This highlights that the physical environment, emotional support from faculty staff as well as institutional trust are the most important factors in stu-

dent experiences and satisfaction, consistent with prior findings that quality perceptions extend beyond academic content to include interpersonal and infrastructural aspects (Malik et al., 2010; Rojas-Méndez et al., 2009). The prominence of tangibles in this model aligns with Hanaysha et al. (2011), emphasizing that well-maintained facilities and modern infrastructure enhance the educational experience.

Our study suggests that reliability and responsiveness are not significantly predictive of satisfaction when only perceptions are considered, which partially diverges from earlier studies (Hasan et al., 2008; Sibai et al., 2021). These results indicate that Hypothesis H2 is not completely supported and there is a certain place for future research. This may suggest that in mature or resource-constrained higher education contexts, students take baseline levels of consistency and promptness for granted, and thus assign greater weight to affective and relational factors.

When only perceived service quality (gap scores) were investigated, the obtained results further support these observations and demonstrate that minimizing gaps in tangibles, empathy, assurance, and reliability positively influence satisfaction. These findings give strong confirmation for Hypothesis H3, which assumes that perceived service quality is a significant predictor of student satisfaction. This aligns with the gap theory underpinning SERVQUAL, where satisfaction is enhanced when perceived performance meets or exceeds (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The significance of reliability in this model, but not in the perception-only model, indicates that discrepancies between expected and actual dependability can markedly affect satisfaction, likely because unmet expectations are salient.

One fascinating result in this study was that responsiveness did not significantly predict satisfaction in any of the models, contradicting some prior research (Khan et al., 2021; Sibai et al., 2021). These results show that none hypothesis has been fully confirmed, although

two of them – Hypothesis 2 and 3 have been confirmed to a significant extent, so through future studies should additionally test relevant dimensions. This finding could reflect contextual differences in student priorities or institutional limitations on staff availability, in which students may have adjusted their expectations downward over time. Alternatively, responsiveness may interact with other variables such as communication clarity or digital engagement, suggesting a need for future studies to explore moderating effects.

The model based solely on expectations yielded the weakest explanatory power, with only reliability emerging as a significant (albeit negatively related) predictor. These results show that Hypothesis H1, which assumes a relationship between expected service quality and student satisfaction, is just partially supported. This finding underscores the limitations of assessments based only on expectations, as satisfaction is fundamentally shaped by real experiences rather than abstract anticipations (Athiyaman, 1997). The negative coefficient for reliability may reflect a disconfirmation effect, in which unfulfilled expectations lead to dissatisfaction, which is a well-known phenomenon supported by expectation-disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980).

Overall, these results confirm and refine the SERVQUAL model's applicability in higher education by demonstrating that students' perceptions and perceived service quality are far more consequential for student satisfaction than expectations alone. This suggests the need for ongoing service quality evaluations in order to identify areas for improvement, that directly shape student experiences, specifically infrastructure, staff engagement, and institutional trust.

6. CONCLUSION

Regarding the theoretical implications, the presented study examined the relationship between perceived service quality and student satisfaction in higher education by using the SERVQUAL framework, while also analyzing the influence of expectations, perceptions, and the perception-expectation gap (perceived service quality) across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Using a robust empirical design involving multiple regression analyses, the findings affirm that perceived service quality is a stronger predictor of student satisfaction than expectations alone.

Among the five dimensions, tangibles, empathy, and assurance consistently emerged as the most in-

fluential across models. This underscores the critical importance of the physical learning environment, personalized support, and professional credibility of staff in shaping students' academic experiences. In contrast, responsiveness, despite being a central tenet of traditional service models, did not significantly impact satisfaction in any model, suggesting a potential reevaluation of its relevance or measurement in modern higher education contexts.

These results have important practical implications – in the domain of their quality improvements, higher education institutions should focus their activities on modernizing their facilities and digital infrastructure (tangibles), strengthening interpersonal engagement (empathy), and improving institutional trust (assurance). Thus, requests are not solely for capital investments. There is also a need for staff training to increase staff engagement and to create student-centered policies. Aligning service delivery with student expectations, particularly in reliability, can mitigate dissatisfaction driven by unmet expectations. That further underscores the need for effective expectation management and proactive service design in higher education institutions.

In conclusion, this research reinforces the enduring relevance of the SERVQUAL framework in evaluating higher education service quality, while also calling for its thoughtful adaptation to contemporary educational realities. Institutions that prioritize tangible enhancements, relational quality, and alignment between promises and performance are better positioned to foster meaningful, lasting student satisfaction.

Possible limitations of this study are reflected in used transversal research design, selection of relevant SERVQUAL dimensions and specifics of the sample of participants. Given these limitations, recommendations for their overcoming have been made, through suggestions for future studies.

In the context of previous insights, recommendations for future research include expanding the scope of analysis through longitudinal and mixed-method designs to capture the evolution of satisfaction over time and the underlying drivers of student perceptions. Future studies should also explore modern adaptations of SERVQUAL by incorporating dimensions such as online engagement quality, virtual staff responsiveness, and online service delivery. Finally, cross-cultural comparative studies would help validate the generalizability of the findings and uncover contextual differences in the drivers of student satisfaction across diverse educational ecosystems.

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Apstrakt

Percipirani kvalitet usluge i zadovoljstvo studenata u visokom obrazovanju: studija zasnovana na SERVQUAL modelu

Vesna Rodić Lukić, Nemanja Lukić, Mladen Subotić, Mia Marić, Nataša Branković

Rad istražuje odnos kvaliteta usluge i zadovoljstva studenata u visokom obrazovanju primenom SERVQUAL modela. Podaci su prikupljeni od studenata na univerzitetima u Srbiji. Kako bi se ispitaio uticaj očekivanja studenata, percepcija i jaza između njih (percipirani kvalitet usluge) na zadovoljstvo studenata, sprovedene su tri regresione analize. Dobijeni rezultati pokazuju da su percepcije studenata o njihovom iskustvu i percipirani kvalitet usluge značajniji prediktori zadovoljstva studenata nego sama očekivanja. Od svih SERVQUAL dimenzija, samo opipljivost, empatija i sigurnost pokazale su se kao ključni pokretači zadovoljstva studenata. S druge strane, spremnost da se odgovori nije pokazala značajan uticaj na zadovoljstvo studenata. Nalazi

istraživanja ukazuju na značaj usklađivanja pružanja usluge i percepcija studenata u institucijama visokog obrazovanja kako bi se postigao viši nivo zadovoljstva studenata. Ove institucije mogu raditi na unapređenju svoje materijalne infrastrukture, emocionalne podrške od strane osoblja, kao i institucionalnog poverenja. Rezultati ovog istraživanja mogu doprineti diskusijama o obezbeđenju kvaliteta u visokom obrazovanju, kao i pružiti praktične uvide u unapređenje kvaliteta usluga u institucijama visokog obrazovanja.

Ključne reči: *zadovoljstvo studenata, SERVQUAL, visoko obrazovanje, očekivanja, percepcije, jaz u kvalitetu*

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Tehničko uputstvo za korišćenje sistema e-Ur: Elektronsko uređivanje časopisa



Poštovani,

Časopis Marketing počinje sa elektronskim uređivanjem kroz sistem e-Ur kojim rukovodi Centar za evaluaciju u obrazovanju i nauci (CEON).

Usled toga, Marketing mora da ispuni niz zahteva koji su postavljeni kroz važeći Akt o uređivanju naučnih časopisa. Step en usaglašenosti sa uslovima koje postavlja Akt o uređivanju naučnih časopisa ubuduće će biti osnov za kategorizaciju naučnih časopisa. Niz uslova koji se postavljaju pred naš časopis automatski će biti ispunjeni pristupanjem sistemu elektronskog uređivanja e-Ur. Pomoću sistema elektronskog uređivanja celokupan uređivački postupak biće daleko jednostavniji, brži i transparentniji, a autor će moći u svakom trenutku da ima uvid u kojoj se fazi uređivačkog postupka nalazi njegov rad. Usaglašavanje sa novim pravilima teći će postepeno i zahteve ćemo postepeno usvajati do konačnog i potpunog usaglašavanja sa uslovima koji se nalaze pred svim naučnim časopisima.

Sa zahvalnošću za razumevanje i napore koje ćemo zajedno uložiti kako bismo naš časopis osavremenili i usaglasili sa važećim uslovima, na zajedničku korist svih, u nastavku Vam dostavljamo detaljno tehničko uputstvo za korišćenje sistema e-Ur. Redakcija će ubuduće ISKLJUČIVO na ovaj način primati radove.

Uredništvo

1. PRAVLJENJE KORISNIČKOG NALOGA – Registracija korisnika u sistem

a) Kada se prvi put registrujete u sistem na web adresi <http://asestant.ceon.rs/index.php/mkng> izaberite opciju

b) Na stranici za registraciju:

- **Koristite isključivo LATINICU** bilo da podatke unosite na srpskom ili engleskom jeziku
- **Obavezno popunite sva polja koja su označena sa zvezdicom (*)**, bez toga nećete moći da dovršite proces registracije.
- Poželjno je da popunite i ostala polja, ali to možete uraditi i naknadno preko opcije **Moj profil**, kada se prijavite na svoj nalog. Takođe sve podatke o sebi, kao o korisniku, moguće je kasnije izmeniti.
- Zapišite na sigurno mesto vaše korisničko ime i loziku, u slučaju da je zaboravite.
- Stranicu **OBAVEZNO POPUNITI DVA PUTA**, i na srpskom i na engleskom jeziku na sledeći način:

- Proveriti da li je u prvom polju **Jezik obrasca** podešena opcija **Srpski**

- Uneti sve podatke koji slede na srpskom jeziku **LATICOM**
- U prvom polju **Jezik obrasca** podesiti opciju **English**
- Uneti sve podatke na engleskom jeziku
- Poslednje opcije se odnose na Vaš status u časopisu (Čitalac, Autor, Recenzent)
 - Profesori treba da obeleže sve tri opcije, autori se mogu istovremeno prijaviti i kao čitaoci.

- Na kraju kliknite na plavo dugme **Registracija**, u dnu stranice.
- Završili ste postupak registracije i automatski ste prijavljeni na svoj nalog.

2. PRIJAVA PRETHODNO REGISTROVANOG KORISNIKA – uređivanje profila; odjava

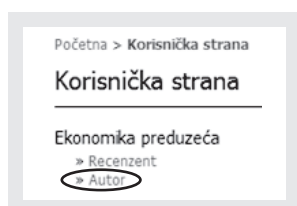
a) Na web adresi <http://scindeks-eur.ceon.rs/index.php/mkng/> upisati korisničko ime i lozinku i kliknuti na plavo dugme **Prijava**

b) Podake o Vama možete u svakom trenutku menjati u opciji **Moj profil**, u meniju sa leve strane. Ulaskom u ovu opciju naći ćete se na identičnoj stranici kao prilikom registracije Vašeg naloga.

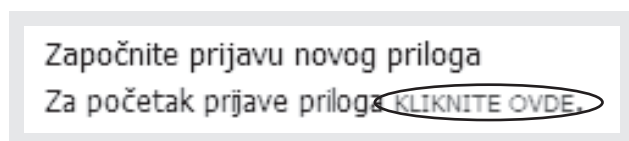
- c) Nakon unetih izmena pritiskom na dugme **Sačuvaj** izvršićete izmene u Vašem profilu.
- d) Po završetku rada odjavite se pritiskom na opciju **Odjava**, u meniju sa leve strane.

3. PRIJAVA NOVOG PRILOGA – predavanje prve verzije rada Uredništva

- Po prijavi (*videti uputstvo 2.a*) odaberite opciju **Autor**.

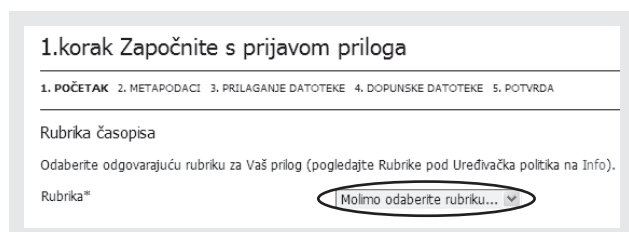


- Za početak prijave priloga izaberite opciju **Kliknite ovde**



Nalazite se na 1. koraku prijave priloga – početak

- a) Obavezno popunite sva polja koja su označena sa zvezdicom (*), bez toga nećete moći da pređete na sledeći korak.
- b) Prvo je neophodno da odaberete odgovarajuću **Rubriku** za Vaš prilog. Rubriku morate odabrati, a Glavni urednik ukoliko bude smatrao da Vaš prilog ne spada u odabranu rubriku, izvršiće potrebnu promenu.



Rubrike obuhvataju naučne i stručne radove. Časopis Marketing objavljuje isključivo naučne radove, a to su:

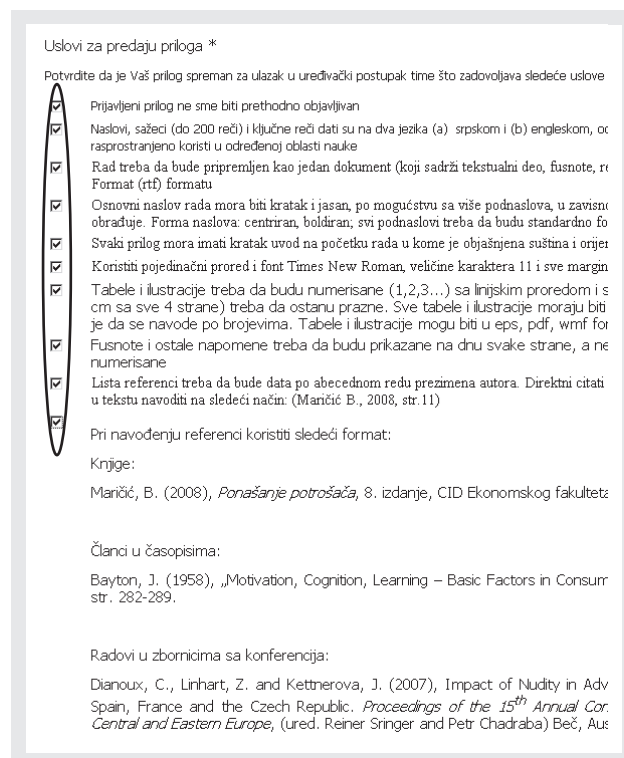
- pregledni članak,
- originalni naučni članak,

- kratko saopštenje,
 - prethodno saopštenje i
 - naučna kritika.
- pregledni članak** je rad koji sadrži originalan, detaljan i kritički prikaz istraživačkog problema ili područja u kojem je autor ostvario određeni doprinos, vidljiv na osnovu auticitata;
 - originalan naučni članak** je rad u kojem se iznose prethodno neobjavljivani rezultati sopstvenih istraživanja naučnim metodom;
 - kratko saopštenje** je originalni naučni rad punog formata, ali manjeg obima;
 - prethodno saopštenje** je originalni naučni rad preliminarnog karaktera;
 - naučna kritika**, odnosno polemika je rasprava na određenu naučnu temu, zasnovana isključivo na naučnoj argumentaciji.

Samo izuzetno, časopis Marketing može objaviti i stručne radove i to:

stručni članak, iskustva iz prakse, uvodnik, komentar, intervju, prikaz, bibliografiju, biografski prilog, istoriografski prilog, prevod, projekat i kratak članak.

- c) Neophodno je da Vaš rad ispunjava sve postavljene tehničke zahteve, nezavisno od toga koliko ih je u datom trenutku prijave postavljeno i da li su eventualno promenjeni od poslednjeg puta kada ste prijavljivali prilog. Tehnička opremljenost rada podrazumeva:



1. Prijavljeni prilog ne sme biti prethodno objavljen
2. Naslovi, apstrakti (do 200 reči) i ključne reči dati su na dva jezika (a) srpskom i (b) engleskom, odnosno izuzetno na nekom drugom svetskom jeziku ako se taj rasprostranjeno koristi u određenoj oblasti nauke
3. Rad treba da bude pripremljen kao jedan dokument (koji sadrži tekstualni deo, fusnote, reference, grafike i tabele) u MS Word (doc) ili Rich Text Format (rtf) formatu
4. Osnovni naslov rada mora biti kratak i jasan, po mogućstvu sa više podnaslova, u zavisnosti od dužine i profila rada, odnosno problema koji se obrađuje. Forma naslova: centriran, boldiran; svi podnaslovi treba da budu standardno formatirani i pozicionirani uz levu marginu
5. Svaki prilog mora imati kratak uvod na početku rada u kome je objašnjena suština i orijentacija priloga
6. Koristiti pojedinačni prored i font Times New Roman, veličine karaktera 11 i sve marginae od 1 inča (2,54 cm).
7. Tabele i ilustracije treba da budu numerisane (1,2,3...) sa linijskim proredom i smeštene u sam tekst. Navedene margine (2,54 cm sa sve 4 strane) treba da ostanu prazne. Sve tabele i ilustracije moraju biti pregledne. Kada se pominju u tekstu, neophodno je da se navode po brojevima. Tabele i ilustracije mogu biti u eps, pdf, wmf formatu ili jednostavno nacrtani u Wordu ili Excelu
8. Fusnote i ostale napomene treba da budu prikazane na dnu svake strane, a ne na kraju rada. Potrebno je da fusnote budu numerisane.
9. Lista referenci treba da bude data po abecednom redu prezimena autora. Direktni citati treba da budu navedeni pod znacima navoda.
10. Pri navođenju referenci u tekstu i na kraju rada koristiti APA (American Psychological Association) stil. Primeri su navedeni u nastavku teksta. *Napomena:* U slučaju direktnih citata neophodno je navesti broj stranice sa koje je tekst preuzet.

1. Knjiga/monografija: Prezime, Inicijal imena. (godina). *Naslov*. Mesto:Izdavač.

1.1. Jedan autor knjige

U tekstu: (Maričić, 2008, p. 77)

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1.2. Više autora knjige

1.2.1. DVA autora

1.2.1.1. rad *domaćih* autora/domaća publikacija:

U tekstu: (Stanković i Đukić, 2014, p. 126)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Stanković, Lj. i Đukić S. (2013). *Marketing* (3. izdanje). Niš: Ekonomski fakultet.

1.2.1.2. rad *inostranih* autora/inostrana publikacija:

U tekstu: (Kotler & Keller, 2014, p. 126)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Kotler, P. T. and Keller K.L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th edition). New York: Pearson.

1.2.2. TRI DO PET autora

1.2.2.1. rad *domaćih* autora/domaća publikacija:

U tekstu:

- **prvo navođenje:** (Maričić, Gligorijević i Milisavljević, 2012, p. 250)

- **svako naredno navođenje:** (Maričić i sar., 2012, p.250)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Maričić, B., Gligorijević, M. i Milisavljević, M. (2012). *Osnovi Marketinga* (5. izdanje). Beograd: Centar za izdavačku delatnost Ekonomskog fakulteta.

1.2.2.2. rad *inostranih* autora/inostrana publikacija:

U tekstu:

- **prvo navođenje:** (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris & Piercy, 2011, p. 56)

- **svako naredno navođenje:** (Kotler *et al.*, 2011, p. 56)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Harris, L. and Piercy, N. (2011). *Principles of Marketing European Edition* (6th edition). London: Pearson.

1.2.3. ŠEST i više autora

U tekstu- svako navođenje: (Lovreta i sar., 2010, p. 117)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Lovreta, S., Brennan, B., Petković, G., Veljković, S., Crnković, J. i Bogetić, Z. (2010). *Menadžment odnosa sa kupcima*. Beograd: Data Status i Centar za izdavačku delatnost Ekonomskog fakulteta Beograd.

1.3. BEZ autora:

U tekstu:

- **prvo navođenje:** (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009)

- **svako naredno navođenje:** (APA, 2009)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Edition). (2009). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

2. Članci u naučnim časopisima: Prezime, Inicijal imena. (godina). Naslov. *Naziv časopisa, volumen (broj)*, prva strana – poslednja strana članka.

2.1. Štampano izdanje naučnog časopisa:

U tekstu: (Bayton, 1958, p. 285)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Bayton, J. (1958). Motivation, Cognition, Learning – Basic Factors in Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, 22 (3), 282-289.

2.2. Onlajn izdanje naučnog časopisa:

U tekstu: (Ognjanov i Stojanović, 2012, p. 115)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Ognjanov, G. i Stojanović, Ž.. (2012). Stavovi potrošača na Zapadnom Balkanu prema oznakama na prehrambenim proizvodima. *Marketing*, 43 (2). Preuzeto sa: [http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0354-3471/2012/0354-347112021130.pdf#search=%](http://scindeks-clanci.ceon.rs/data/pdf/0354-3471/2012/0354-347112021130.pdf#search=%22ognjanov%22)

22ognjanov%22 (datum preuzimanja/pristupa, format: dd.mm.gggg.)

NAPOMENA: U slučaju da je naučni članak rezultat istraživanja više autora, pravila citiranja su ista kao i za knjige.

3. Radovi u zbornicima sa konferencija (saopštenja štampana u celini): Prezime, Inicijal imena. (godina). Naslov. U: Inicijal imena, Prezime urednika/redaktora (ur.), *Naziv zbornika* (prva strana – poslednja strana članka). Mesto: Izdavač.

U tekstu:

- **prvo navođenje** (Dianoux, Linhart & Kattnerova, 2007, p. 42)

- **svako naredno navođenje** (Dianoux et al., 2007, p. 42)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Dianoux, C., Linhart, Z. & Kettnerova, J. (2007). Impact of Nudity in Advertisements: Comparison of the First Results from Spain, France and the Czech Republic. In R. Springer & P. Chadraha (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 15th Annual Conference on Marketing and Business Strategies for Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. str. 41-49), Vienna: WU.

NAPOMENA: ostala pravila citiranja (broj autora, domaći/inostrani autori, onlajn izvori) su ista kao i za knjige i naučne članke.

4. Diplomski, master, magistarski i doktorski radovi: Prezime, Inicijal imena. (godina). *Naslov* (vrsta rada). Ustanova gde je objavljen rad. Mesto.

U tekstu: (Popović, 2015, p.49)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Popović, A. (2015). *Specifičnosti primene marketing koncepta u visokoškolskim ustanovama* (doktorska disertacija). Ekonomski fakultet. Niš.

NAPOMENA: ostala pravila citiranja (broj autora, domaći/inostrani autori, onlajn izvori) su ista kao i za knjige i naučne članke.

5. Tekst preuzet sa Interneta : Prezime, Inicijal imena. (godina). *Naslov*. Preuzeto ... (datum) sa ... (Internet adresa).

U tekstu: (Oliveira, 2009)

U spisku referenci na kraju rada: Oliveira, A. (2009). *The Motivation Process*. Preuzeto 02.04.2014. sa: www.sam.sdu.dk/~amo/ppt/capit4.pdf.

NAPOMENA: ostala pravila citiranja (broj autora, domaći/inostrani autori, onlajn izvori) su ista kao i za knjige i naučne članke.

DETALJNIJE INFORMACIJE O APA STILU REFERENCIRANJA SU DOSTUPNE NA: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

- d) Pročitajte ih pažljivo i potvrdite samo onda kada Vaš rad zaista ispunjava date uslove. Ukoliko Vaš rad to ne ispunjava, uredite ga i potom nastavite postupak prijave. Tek kada budete sigurni da Vaš rad ispunjava postavljene uslove **označite sve kockice**.
- e) Na ovaj način preuzimate odgovornost da Vaš prilog zaista i ispunjava postavljene uslove, na osnovu čega će biti doneta odluka o ulasku u uređivački postupak.
- f) Pređite na sledeći korak pritiskom na dugme u dnu **Sačuvaj i nastavi**

Nalazite se na 2. koraku prijave priloga – metapodaci - najznačajniji korak u prijavi novog priloga

- a) **Metapodaci** su podaci o radu koji se, nezavisno od toga što se oni uključuju u sam rad, **posebno unose u sam sistem** kako bi pratili rad i omogućili dalje praćenje citiranosti rada i ostalih relevantnih parametara.
- b) **Metapodaci** uključuju:
 - Podatke o autoru
 - Naslov i sažetak
 - Ostale podatke
- c) Potrebno je da metapodatke **unesete isključivo LATINICOM** bilo da podatke unosite na srpskom ili engleskom jeziku.
- d) **Podatke o autoru** sam sistem preuzima sa Vašeg profila. Oni takođe **moraju biti ispisani LATNICOM**.
- e) **Obavezno popunite sva polja koja su označena sa zvezdicom (*)**.

f) Stranicu **OBAVEZNO POPUNITI DVA PUTA**, i na srpskom i na engleskom jeziku na sledeći način:

- Proveriti da li je u prvom polju **Jezik obrasca** podešena opcija **Srpski**
- Uneti sve metapodatke koji slede na srpskom jeziku **obavezno LATINICOM**



- U prvom polju **Jezik obrasca** podesiti opciju **English**
- Uneti sve metapodatke na engleskom jeziku



- Pređite na sledeći korak pritiskom na dugme u dnu **Sačuvaj i nastavi**

Nalazite se na 3. koraku prijave priloga – prilaganje datoteke

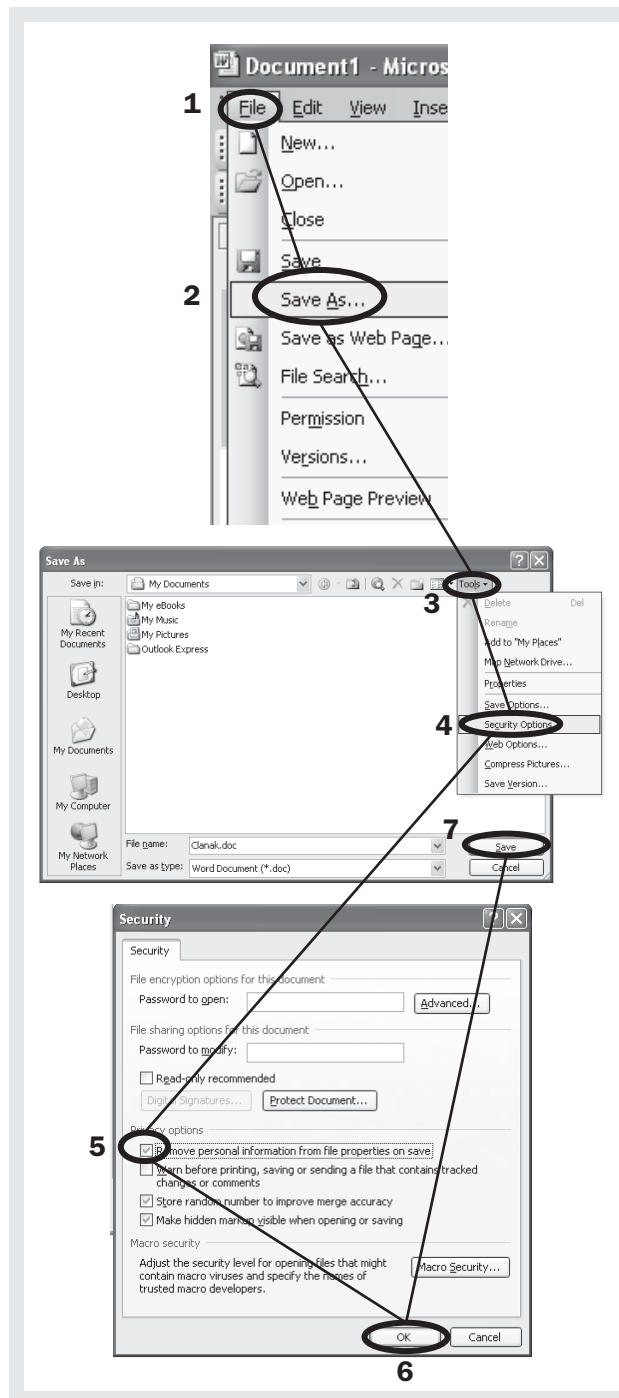
- Na ovom koraku u sistem podnosite samu **datoteku (fajl) u WORD formatu (.doc ili .docx)**
- Vodite računa da se Vaš **rad podnosi u verziji koja tek treba da ide na recenziju**. Ne treba podnositi rad koji je prošao postupak recenzije izvan sistema. Smisao sistema **e-Ur** jeste upravo u vršenju uređivačkog, time i postupka recenzije kroz sistem, na osnovu čega se vrši evaluacija kvaliteta uređivanja časopisa, pa i samog rada.
- Datoteka (fajl) u WORD formatu ne sme sadržati podatke o autoru – afilijaciju**. Sistem zahteva da postupak recenzije bude anoniman, odnosno da recenzent kada dobije rad nema u njemu i podatke o autoru. Nakon okončanja postupka recenzije Autor će podatke o sebi uneti u rad, pre predaje za objavljivanje.
- U slučajevima kada se Autor poziva na svoju knjigu ili članak, **neophodno je izostaviti oblike sa**

prisvojnim pridevima „moj rad“, „naš rad“ i sl. i pozivati se kao da je u pitanju drugi autor (npr. *Videti više o tome Petrović, P..*).

e) Neophodno je da **autor u datoteci (fajlu) Microsoft Word iz Properties ukloni ličnu identifikaciju** na sledeći način:

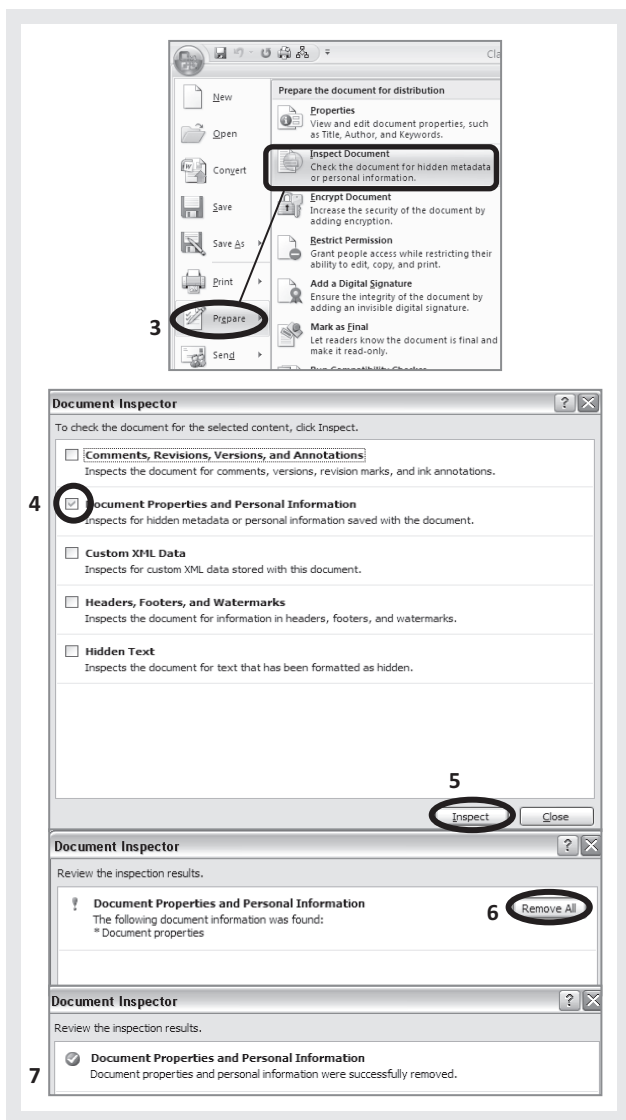
► **Za verzije Word zaključno sa 2003:**

File > Save As > Tools > Security > Remove personal information from file on save > OK > Save



► **Za verziju Word2007:**

- a) Kliknite na **Office button** u gornjem levom uglu prozora
- b) Izaberite opciju **Prepare**, a zatim opciju **Inspect Document**
- c) Označite **Document Properties and Personal Information**
- d) Kliknite na dugme **Inspect**
- e) Kliknite na dugme **Remove All**
- f) Program će potvrditi brisanje ličnih podataka
- g) Kliknite na dugme **Close**

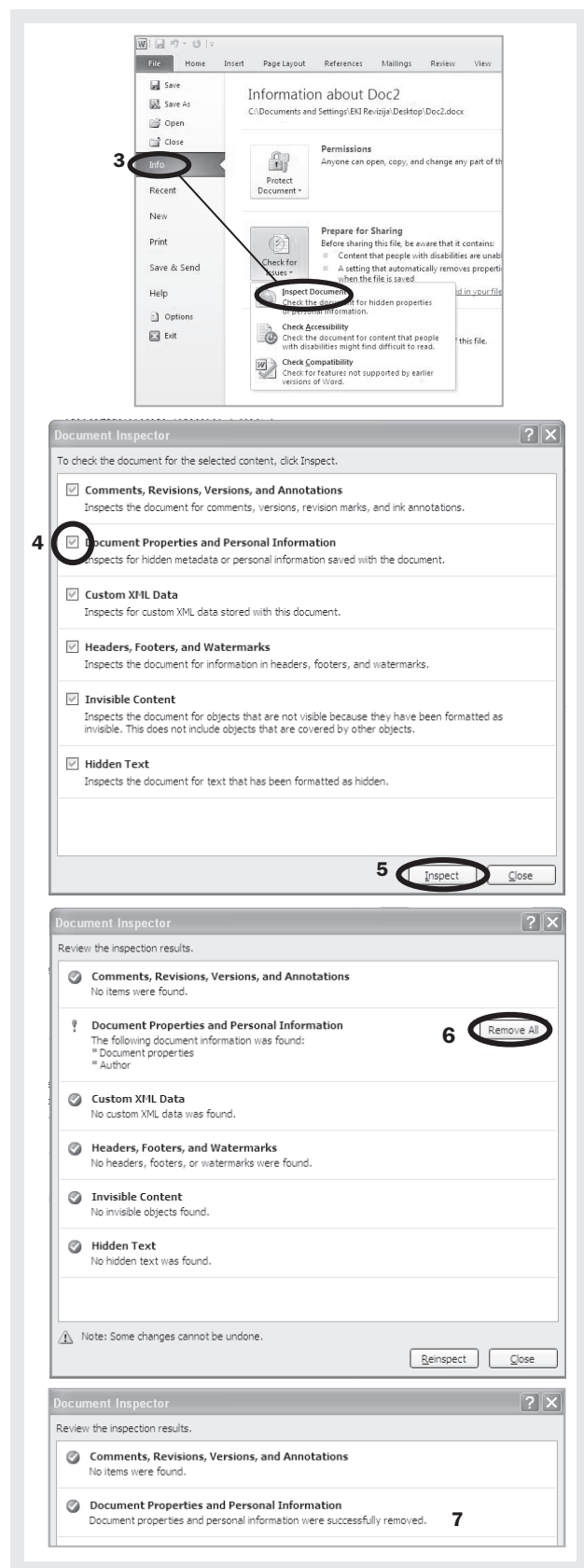


► **Za verziju Word 2010:**

- (slično kao i 2007)
- a) Izaberite opciju **Info**, a zatim opciju **Inspect Document**
- b) Kliknite na dugme **Inspect**
- c) Kliknite na dugme **Remove All**

d) Program će potvrditi brisanje ličnih podataka

e) Kliknite na dugme **Close**



- Zahtev anonimnosti recenzije postavlja važeći Akt o uređivanju naučnih časopisa, donet od strane Ministarstva za nauku i tehnološki razvoj, koji je moguće pronaći na Internet adresi: http://ceon.rs/pdf/akt_o_uredjivanju_casopisa.pdf
- Datoteka (fajl) u WORD formatu moraju u sebi sadržati sve metapodatke (naslov i sažetak) i na

srpskom i na engleskom, identične onima koje ste uneli u prethodnom koraku. U slučaju da tokom procesa recenziranja dođe do promene metapodataka, Glavni urednik će izvršiti njihovu izmenu.

- **Sledite detaljna uputstva za prilaganje datoteke koja sadrži Vaš prilog** koja su Vam data na stranici na kojoj se nalazite:

3.korak Prilaganje datoteke

1. POČETAK 2. METAPODACI 3. **PRILAGANJE DATOTEKE** 4. DODATNE DATOTEKE 5. POTVRDA

Da biste priložili rukopis, unesite naziv odgovarajuće datoteke na lokanom disku Vašeg računara, uključujući i putanju do datoteke. To možete učiniti tako da:

1. Kliknite (dole) na *Browse* (ili *Choose file*), čime otvarate prozor za navigaciju u Vašem računaru.
2. Locirajte datoteku i označite je.
3. Kliknite na *Open* u prozoru *Choose File*, čime upisujete naziv datoteke u odgovarajući prostor sistema e-Ur.
4. Kliknite na *Pošalji datoteku*, čime se datoteka s računara prenosi na e-Ur stranicu časopisa.
5. Kada se naziv i podaci o datoteci ispišu na ekranu, kliknite na *Sačuvaj i nastavi*.

Sadržaj priložene datoteke možete da proverite ukoliko kliknete na njen naziv. Pritom možete da je zamenite novom ili revidiranom datotekom.

Datoteka s prilogom

Datoteka još nije priložena.

Postavi datoteku priloga

Nalazite se na 4. koraku prijave priloga – prilaganje dodatne datoteke

- Ovaj korak Vam uobičajeno neće trebati, već pređite direktno na korak br. 5.

Dopunska datoteka

Nema postavljene datoteke.

Postavi datoteku Odaberite "Sačuvaj" da biste postavili datoteku (nakon toga možete priložiti još dopunskih datoteka).

Želim ovu datoteku (bez metapodataka) da učinim dostupnom recenzentima, budući da neće ugroziti anonimnost recenzije.

Nalazite se na 5. koraku prijave priloga – potvrda prijave priloga

- Poslednji korak Vam omogućava da **klikom na ime datoteke** u polju *Izvorno ime datoteke* prekontrolišete poslednji put da li ste u sistem položili odgovarajući dokument.

Kratak pregled datoteke

ID	IZVORNO IME DATOTEKE
86	CLANAK.DOCX

- U slučaju da utvrdite da ste podneli pogrešan dokument, pre dovršetka prijave priloga, kliknite na opciju **3. Prilaganje datoteke** i naćićete se na 3. koraku prijave priloga. Ponovite postupak i izaberite odgovarajući dokument koji će zameniti stari.

5. korak Potvrdite prijavljivanje priloga

1. POČETAK 2. METAPODACI 3. PRILAGANJE DATOTEKE 4. DODATNE DATOTEKE 5. POTVRDA

- Klikom na dugme **Dovrši prijavu priloga** završavate postupak i Vaš rad je tog momenta predat Uredništvu.

4. POSTUPAK NAKON PREDAJE PRILOGA

- Nakon obavljenog postupka predaje priloga Vaš rad se nalazi u postupku uređivanja, o čijem toku ćete od samog početka biti obavestavani putem mejl adrese koju ste uneli u sistem prilikom registracije. Molimo Vas da elektronsku poštu na adresi koju ste uneli prilikom registracije proveravate redovno.
- Promena imejl adrese, putem koje će Vas sistem obavestavati Vašem prilogu, moguća je pod opcijom **Moj profil**
- Osim putem obaveštenja elektronskom poštom, u svakom trenutku prijavom u sistem možete videti u kojoj se fazi nalazi Vaš rad.
 - a) Po izvršenoj prijavi odaberite opciju **Autor**.
 - b) Pred Vama će se otvoriti prozor **Aktivni priloz** u kome ćete moći da vidite status svih Vaših priloga koje ste podneli Uredništvu.
 - c) Klikom na aktivne opcije možete se informisati:
 1. O samom prilogu klikom na aktivni **naslov priloga**
 2. O postupku uređivanja i rokovima u kojima će određene faze uređivačkog postupka biti realizovane, klikom na aktivni **status priloga**.

Početna > Korišnik > Autor > Aktivni priloz

Aktivni priloz

ID	IMEN PRILOZI	RUBRIKA	AUTOR(I)	NASLOV	STATUS
61	10-11	ČLA	Petrović	CLANAK	U RECENZIJU

1 - 1 od 1 stavke(j)

Započnite prijavu novog priloga
Za početak prijave priloga **KLIKINITE OVDE**.

5. INDEKSIRANJE (ODREĐIVANJE KLJUČNIH REČI)

- Indeksiranje rada, odnosno određivanje ključnih reči (KR) je takođe operacija od velike važnosti. Rad koji je dobro indeksiran, lakše će biti pronađen od strane onih kojima je potreban i verovatnije će biti citiran. Zato se u e-Ur indeksiranju poklanja najveća moguća pažnja. S tim ciljem razvijen je i ugrađen u e-Ur sistem za podršku dodeljivanja ključnih reči (KWASS: KeyWords Assignment Support System).
- KWASS se koristi u dva koraka:
 1. Sistem najpre automatski generiše određeni broj KR. Zaseban modul (AKwA: Automatic KeyWords Assignment) analizira naslov i apstrakt i ekstrahuje iz odgovarajućeg rečnika/tezaurusa određeni, obično veći broj KR koje najbolje opisuju sadržaj rada. AKwA KR se upisuju u gornji okvir u rubrici pod nazivom Ključne reči na stranici Uređivanje metapodataka.
 2. Po obaveštenju da Vam je rad prihvaćen ili uslovno prihvaćen (odluka: Prihvatiti, Neophodne izmene, Ponovo predati na recenziju) pristupite toj rubrici i overite AKwA KR. Pri tom koristite alatku (KeFiR: KeyWords Final Refinement) koja Vam omogućava da svaku pojedinačnu reč prihvatite ili zamene drugom. Prihvaćene pomoću odgovarajućeg dugmeta prepisujete u zaseban (donji) okvir u istoj rubrici.
- Odabir KR za zamenu obavlja pretraživanjem istog rečnika/tezarusa iz koga su i ekstrahovane:
 - U donji okvir (slika u nastavku) unosi se niz od nekoliko slova da bi se izlistali svi termini u rečniku koji započinju tim nizom, a zatim
 - Klikom na onu koja Vam najviše odgovara upisujete tu reč u predviđeni okvir.
 - Ako u rečniku ne nalazite reči koje bi bile dobra zamena ili dopuna AKwA rečima, izuzetno možete upotrebiti reč po sopstvenom izboru. U Vašem interesu je da izbegavate reči koje nisu šire prihvaćene i retko se javljaju, makar precizno opisivale Vaš rad.
 - Preporučljivo je, ako je moguće, da izbor KR pored pojmova obuhvati još bar po jedan termin koji se odnosi na geografsku lokaciju, karakteristike korišćenog uzorka i opis metoda istraživanja. Ukupan broj KR trebalo bi da bude orijentaciono 10.

Instructions to Authors

- In *Marketing* we accept only original work, not submitted for publication elsewhere and previously not published.
- Both empirical and conceptual papers are welcome.
- All manuscripts submitted for publication in *Marketing* are subject to double blind peer review. The first round of the review process lasts one to two months approximately. Number of rounds depends upon reviewers' suggestions and final decision of the editors.
- The manuscripts should not be less than 30,000 characters including spaces (about 10 pages).
- The writing style should be academic using short and clear sentences. Prior to submitting, please make sure that the manuscript was copy edited, preferably by a native English speaker.
- The manuscripts should be submitted as a single document in Word of Rich Text Format, including title, abstract, key words, JEL classification, main body of the text, tables, graphs, charts, figures, illustrations and references. Tables, figures and other illustrations should be numbered (1,2,3...) and clearly labeled at the top with a legend at the bottom.
- Use A4 page format, Times New Roman 11, all margins 1 inch (2.54 cm), single line spacing throughout the text (including tables, figures, graphs, references etc).
- The cover page should contain following elements: **title of the paper** (center alignment, bold), author's name and affiliation (center alignment), **abstract** (left alignment), *key words* (left alignment, italic) and JEL classification (left alignment).
- Please make sure that the title of the paper is not too long and use subtitles if necessary.
- Abstract should be up to 200 words with maximum of 5 key words.
- **Headings (1,2,3...)** and only one level of *subheadings* (1.1., 2.1., 3.1...) should be numbered, left aligned, bold/italic.
- Use footnotes (not endnotes) only if necessary, numbering them properly.
- References should be placed within the text as well as at its end, using APA style. **For detailed instructions please follow the link: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>**

Examples of referencing using APA style:

In the text

Two Authors:

Research by Wegener and Petty (1994) supports... (Wegener & Petty, 1994)

Three to Five Authors:

First time you cite the source

Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry & Harlow (1993) in their seminal work...

(Kernis, Cornell, Sun, Berry, & Harlow, 1993)

Subsequent citations:

Kernis et al (1993) showed...

(Kernis et al., 1993)

Six or More Authors:

Harris et al. (2001) argued...

(Harris et al., 2001)

At the end of the paper

Books:

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). *Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle*. Location: Publisher.

Calfee, R. C., & Valencia, R. R. (1991). *APA guide to preparing manuscripts for journal publication*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Edited book:

Duncan, G. J., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Articles in periodicals:

Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical, volume number* (issue number), pages.

Harlow, H. F. (1983). Fundamentals for preparing psychology journal articles. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology, 55*, 893-896.

Articles in on-line periodicals and sources

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Online Periodical, volume number* (issue number if available). Retrieved from <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

Bernstein, M. (2002). 10 tips on writing the living Web. *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites, 149*. Retrieved from <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving>

Articles with DOI

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, volume number, page range. doi:0000000/000000000000 or <http://dx.doi.org/10.0000/0000>

Brownlie, D. (2007). Toward effective poster presentations: An annotated bibliography. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41, 1245-1283. doi:10.1108/03090560710821161

Newspapers:

Author, A. A. (Year, Month Day). Title of article. *Title of Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://www.someaddress.com/full/url/>

Parker-Pope, T. (2008, May 6). Psychiatry handbook linked to drug industry. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/psychiatry-handbook-linked-to-drug-industry/?_r=0

Electronic books

De Huff, E. W. (n.d.). *Taytay's tales: Traditional Pueblo Indian tales*. Retrieved from <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/dehuff/taytay/taytay.html>

- The authors should submit their papers online, using the following web link: <http://aseestant.ceon.rs/index.php/mkng>

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Once you create your profile/log in, chose the option Author and go to Active submission. There you would find a link Start a new submission.

The screenshot shows the SCINDEXS ASSISTANT interface. The top navigation bar includes icons for Home, About, User Home, Search, Current, Archives, and Help. The left sidebar contains sections for Marketing, User (galja), Author, Language, and Font Size. The main content area displays the breadcrumb 'Home > User > Author > Active Submissions' and a table with columns: ID, Submit (MM-DD), Sec, Authors, Title, and Status. Below the table, there is a 'Start a New Submission' button and a link to 'CLICK HERE to go to step one of the five-step submission process!'. The ISSN number 0354-3471 is also visible.

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