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Contents

PREFACE.....	1
SECTION 1: PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, PEDAGOGY AND SOCIOLOGY.....	3
New trends in the implementation of neuromarketing at higher educational institutions.....	4
Nevenka Popović Šević, Milica Slijepčević, Ivana Radojević.....	4
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN DENTISTRY EDUCATION FIELD – PATH TO A CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT.....	13
Iva Ljumović, Nikola Puvača, Adam Malešević, Željko Vlasisavljević, Đorđe Pejanović, Nikola Radović.....	13
ANALYSIS ON THE MODE OF CHINA - SERBIA COOPERATIVE EDUCATION -- TAKING CABIN CREW SERVICE AS AN EXAMPLE.....	16
Ge Tingting.....	16
CHALLENGES OF MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION: RESTRUCTURING IN LINE WITH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS.....	22
Ivana Salopek Čubrić, Goran Čubrić.....	22
CONTROVERSIES AND CHALLENGES OF APPLYING AI IN EDUCATION.....	28
Viktor Radun.....	28
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY.....	35
Jelena Subotić-Krivokapić, Slobodan Subotić.....	35
Digital Media Literacy in Journalism Education: Navigating the Challenges.....	40
Dragana Milin.....	40
MODERN METHODS OF COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS.....	46
Biljana Ilić, Bojana Ostojić, Milica Ž. Ilić.....	46
BENEFITS OF MEDICAL ROLE-PLAY FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN-EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE.....	52
Silvia Gladić, Maja Galić, Mirjana Galić, Milana Demić, Nevenka Kovač, Gorana Stanić.....	52
MODEL OF TEACHER'S DIGITAL COMPETENCE.....	59
Rasulya Aetdinova.....	59
APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS.....	63
Elmira Nazmиеva, Tatiana Tregubova.....	63
SELF-REFLECTIONS OF FUTURE PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE MENTORING EXPERIENCE IN THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT.....	67
Mira Jovanović, Ljiljana Stankov, Sanja Vuletić.....	67
ON THE ISSUE OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION DEVELOPMENT IN EFL CLASS.....	72
Elmira Nazmиеva.....	72

EXPLORING STUDENT'S VIEW ON USE OF CHAT GPT IN THE STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION.....	76
Julija Mironova, Viktorija Riaschenko , arina Celika, Valentina Djakona.....	76
SUPPORT MODELS FOR THE CHILD DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD – EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE.....	81
Nataša Dubljanin, Mira Jovanović, Ljiljana Stankov.....	81
INCLUDE ME AND I WILL UNDERSTAND – APPLICATION OF DRAMA METHOD IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF A CHILD.....	87
Ljiljana Kelemen Milojević, Ivana Đorđev.....	87
EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN REPUBLIC OF SERBIA.....	95
Nikola Radivojević, Duško Petrović.....	95
AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS A QUALITY ASSURANCE FACTOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....	101
Tatiana Tregubova.....	101
SWOT ANALYSIS OF ONLINE TEACHING IN MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION DURING AND AFTER COVID-19.....	106
Jelena Maksimović.....	106
FORMATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL STABILITY AS A RESULT OF MENTORING.....	112
Alexandra Kats.....	112
THE CONNECTION OF THE PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEMS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EDUCATORS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.....	117
Tanja Panić, Marta Dedaj, Dunja Panić.....	117
Project-Based Technology in Students' Self-Directed Language Learning.....	123
Rimma Raisovna Sagitova.....	123
INTEGRATED LEARNING OF NATURAL PHENOMENA IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH PLAY AND PLANNED LEARNING SITUATIONS.....	127
Jasmina Damnjanović, Marta Dedaj, Stanko Cvjetičanin.....	127
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING.....	134
Jasmina Veljković.....	134
THE CONNECTION OF THE PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL SYSTEMS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EDUCATORS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.....	142
Tanja Panić, Marta Dedaj, Dunja Panić.....	142
Personality and illness as a crisis event.....	149
Marina Kostić.....	149

CROWDSOURCING AND NETWORKING AS ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE.....	154
Irina N. Ainoutdinova, Karina A. Ainoutdinova.....	154
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND TECHNIQUES OF INTERACTIVITY: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE TEACHING PROCESS.....	160
Maja S. Vukadinović, Nataša Papić-Blagojević, Tamara Verežan.....	160
DO THEY STUDY ONLY FOR GRADES?.....	164
Sandra Kadum, Deborah Catela.....	164
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND STUDENTS' READING HABITS: TOWARD IN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LEARNING.....	170
Danica Veselinov, Jasmina Mirković.....	170
Implementation of Dual Education in Higher Education in the Republic of Serbia and Countries in the Region - A Comparative Analysis.....	181
Doloris Bešić-Vukašinović, Ljiljana Pecić.....	181
NARRATIVE SKILLS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.....	188
Martina Galeković.....	188
THE TREE WITHOUT ROOTS OF EDUCATION TODAY.....	197
Magdalena Dumitrana.....	197
THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP AS A LANDMARK IN THE FUTURE TEACHING PROFESSION.....	201
Magdalena Dumitrana.....	201
THE INFLUENCE OF MYTHOLOGY IN BLAKE'S POETRY.....	206
Katarina S. Lazić.....	206
AI TECHNOLOGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES IN TEACHING METHODOLOGY (LANGUAGE AND MUSIC).....	215
Sladana Marić.....	215
THE INFLUENCE OF ACTIVITIES AIMED AT COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES ON THE ADAPTATION OF A CHILD TO THE PRESCHOOL INSTITUTION.....	221
Tamara Grujić, Danijela Radlović Čubrilo.....	221
ETHICS IN COMMUNICATION OF THE CONSUMER SOCIETY: SIGNIFICANCE FOR SPORTS AND HEALTH.....	227
Ivana Markov Čikić Dragica Luković Jablanović.....	227
STRATEGY FOR MAKING DUAL HIGHER EDUCATION INCLUSIVE AND CONNECTED TO SOCIETY 235	
Tatjana Marinkovic, Gabrijela Grujić, Marina Stamenovic.....	235
SECTION 2: LAW, ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCES.....	239

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF SECESSIONISM.....	240
Zoran Malbašić, Milovan Trbojević.....	240
MANDATE LIMITATION OF INSTITUTIONAL HEADS ACCORDING TO THE ACT ON SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA.....	246
Alen Lalić, Ivana Kardum Goleš.....	246
Gastronomy and tourism - The Impact of Food Experiences on Tourist Perceptions of a Destination.....	252
Miloš Zrnić.....	252
SIGNIFICANCE AND ROLE OF CONTROLLING IN COMPANY BUSINESS.....	258
Zdravka Petković, Denis Stojkanović, Tijana Milanović, Radica Jovanović.....	258
THE RIGHT TO GOOD ADMINISTRATION IN EU LAW.....	265
Sofija Vukićević Vujičić Nebojša Jerinić.....	265
MARKETING AS A BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY OF SERBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.....	270
Saša Marković.....	270
CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AS A PREDICTOR OF CONSUMERS PURCHASE INTENTIONS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA.....	277
Stefan Zdravković. Aleksandar Jovanović.....	277
DIGITAL INNOVATIONS IN THE FUNCTION OF THE ECONOMIC SERBIAN DEVELOPMENT.....	283
Dragana Đurić, Petar Veselinović, Jelena Maslovara Jovanović, Bogoljub Milić.....	283
THE JOB SATISFACTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF: VIEW THROUGH THE AMO MODEL.....	292
Julija Avakumović.....	292
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AT THE WORKPLACE - ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS.. 300	
Srđan Bogetić, Zorana Antić, Nebojša Pušara.....	300
THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE LABOR MARKET AND CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	306
Iva Bubanja, Marijana Vidas-Bubanja.....	306
THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE.....	312
Ana Dukić, Ana Urošević, Dragana Vuković.....	312
ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE AND ROLE OF THE EU SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA.....	318
Nataša Papić-Blagojević, Željko Račić, Nada Mijajlović.....	318
Assessment of the Effectiveness of Teaching in Higher Education Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	323
Milena Popović, Bisera Andrić Gušavac.....	323
DIGITAL INNOVATIONS IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES AS A TOOL OF DIGITAL ECONOMY FOR WORKING MARKET.....	329

Jevgenija Dehtjare, Kristīne Užule, Julija Mironova..	329
Trends in education in the context of the digital economy.....	334
Jelena Vemić Đurković, Sanja Nikolić.....	334
ANALYSIS OF STUDENT NEEDS AND REQUIRED TEACHER COMPETENCES IN THE DIGITAL ERA	
342	
Željko Račić, Nataša Papić-Blagojević.....	342
FREE WALKING TOURS AT A GLANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW.....	347
Jelena Stefanović, Kristina Rusić.....	347
A BIBLIOMETRIC APPROACH TOWARDS ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EUROPEAN FUNDS.....	355
BALAN Diana, NICOLESCU Ana-Cristina.....	355
JOB POSITIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY	
ORGANIZATIONS.....	361
Jelena Lukić Nikolić, Snežana Lazarević, Charles Ramendran SPR.....	361
CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND STATE AS PARTNERS DURING THE INVESTING IN THE FIELD	
OF NEW TECHNOLOGES AND INNOVATIONS.....	367
Dejan Antanasković, Srđan Skorup, Admir Muslija.....	367
THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR	
AND PERFORMANCE.....	373
Jelena Lukić Nikolić.....	373
NAVIGATING THE NEXUS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, DYNAMIC MACROECONOMIC STABILITY, AND	
ECONOMIC SYSTEM SECURITY.....	379
Oana-Ramona LOBONȚ, Andrei TRIP, Ran TAO.....	379
THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION ON ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY AND	
SUSTAINABLE COMPANIES.....	395
Petru ȘTEFEA, Grațîela Georgiana NOJA, Andrea GÎNGUȚĂ, Irina-Maria GRECU (LAMURA) ,	
Andrei Cristian SPULBĂR, Lavinia Daniela MIHIȚ.....	395
Resilient environmental governance and climate change mitigation: a systematic review and	
bibliometric analysis of the scientific literature.....	410
Marilen-Gabriel Pirtea Grațîela Georgiana-Noja Nicoleta-Claudia Moldovan Miruna-Lucia	
Năchescu Alexandra-Mădălina Țăran.....	410
A THOROUGH OVERVIEW OF THE RELATION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND	
CLIMATE CHANGE RISK - A SYSTEMATIC, BIBLIOMETRIC AND CONTENT ANALYSIS.....	422
Ciel Man, Raluca Răcățian, Cristina Criste, Nicoleta Moldovan.....	422
A THOROUGH OVERVIEW OF THE RELATION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND	
CLIMATE CHANGE RISK - A SYSTEMATIC, BIBLIOMETRIC AND CONTENT ANALYSIS.....	436
Ciel Man, Raluca Răcățian, Cristina Criste , Nicoleta Moldovan.....	436
RISK MANAGEMENT IN FIRE PROTECTION AS A CONSEQUENCE OF ELECTROMECHANICAL	
CAUSES.....	450

Martina Petković, Goran Đorđević, Zoran Popović, Milan Mišić, Bojan Stojčetočić, Strahinja Đurović.....	450
THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF RADIO-FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION DEVICE FOR THE SUPPLY CHAIN OPERATIONS AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS - THE CASE OF THE ZARA COMPANY.....	457
Milan Veselinović , Gordana Jovanović , Slaviša Milić , Milica Vukićević, Nikoleta Mihajlović.	457
THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN FOR THE IMPROVEMENTS IN COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES - THE CASE OF COCA-COLA & MCDONALD'S COOPERATION.....	467
Milan Veselinović, Violeta Mihajlovic Jasmina Smigic-Miladinovic, Aleksandar Radović.....	467
ANALYSIS OF NEW FRAMEWORKS AND PROCESSES IN PUBLIC OPINION, CONNECTION WITH DIPLOMACY AND POLITICS.....	476
Mihailo Bukvić, Zoran Branković Zorica Lola Jelić.....	476
THE INFLUENCE OF TEXTBOOKS AND TEACHING MATERIALS ON ETHNOCENTRISM AND RACISM IN EDUCATION.....	489
Zorana Bodiřoga.....	489
"IRON DOME" - ISRAEL'S MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM.....	494
Cedomir Gerzic.....	494
Exploring Household-Level Utilization of Information and Communication Technologies in the Republic of Serbia: A Comprehensive Analysis”.....	500
Emilija Samardžić Nikola Samardžić Bojana Teofilović Marko Starčević.....	500
POSSIBILITIES OF APPLICATION OF BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM.....	511
Violeta Tošić, Milana Borković, Ana Savić.....	511
TEACHING/LEARNING ECONOMIC CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES THROUGH THE LENS OF VISUALISATION, CONCEPTUALISATION AND SYMBOLISATION.....	517
Ivan Milošević, Mirjana Ilić, Jasmina Leković,.....	517
KNOWLEDGE OF TOURISM STUDENTS - CASE STUDY: CULTURAL-ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF SERBIA.....	522
Sara Stanić Jovanović , Danijela Mladenović , Dragana Vuković.....	522
WESTERN BALKAN ECONOMIES IN PANDEMIC AND WAR CIRCUMSTANCES.....	527
Sandra Stojadinović Jovanović.....	527
CROSSING BORDERS: THE IMPACT OF TEMPORARY MOBILITY ON GRADUATE MIGRATION INTENTIONS IN CROATIA.....	535
Ljerka Sedlan König.....	535
TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF WEBSITE SEO OPTIMIZATION.....	540
Miloš Stojanović Veljko Radićević Jasmina Gligorićević Zoran Pavlović.....	540
ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EMAIL MARKETING AND PERSONALIZATION OF EMAIL MESSAGES FOR B2B CUSTOMERS.....	544
Miloš Stojanović Veljko Radićević Goran Pavlović Pavle Mitić4, Anja Veličković5.....	544

PROPOSAL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CURRICULUM OF THE USE OF TACTICS UNIT 2 AT THE MILITARY ACADEMY.....	549
Miroslav Terzić.....	549
CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE PROCESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.....	556
Dragan Vukmirović, Ranka Popovac, Nebojša Stanojević, Tijana Čomić.....	556
CORRELATION BETWEEN PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND LEADERSHIP STYLES.....	562
Vladimir Milošev, Dubravko Marić, Rade Dragović, Igor Kostovski.....	562
LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES IN HIGHER EDUCATION.....	567
Dragan Dukić, Dragan Đuranović, Jasmina Damjanović.....	567
EXPLORING THE INVESTIGATIVE STATUS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-COMMERCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS.....	575
Doran Marius Dalian, Badareu Gabriela, Doran Nicoleta Mihaela, Nicola Bogdan Laurențiu.....	575
DIGITAL DEMOCRACY: THE INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OPINION.....	589
Anastasiia Katekina.....	589
POLYPROFESSIONAL PROJECT TRAINING SYSTEM AS A METHOD FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.....	594
Yury Tregubov.....	594
FORECASTING E-COMMERCE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - THE MOST EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL RATIOS. WHAT MANAGERS TO LOOK FOR?.....	598
Diana Dumitrescu, Nicolae Bobițan.....	598
DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AMONG STUDENTS.....	608
Bojan Stojčetočić, Milan Mišić, Sanja Marković.....	608
THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA'S INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT AND ITS ATTRACTIVENESS FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION.....	614
Biljana Stankov, Đorđe Ćuzović.....	614
ACCOUNTING FOR INTANGIBLES: Status Quo because of Going Digital.....	620
Amer Rastić, Slavoljub Šljivić, Muamer Rastić.....	620
The Economics factors of the serbian military neutrality.....	628
Milica Ćurčić, Milan Ljušić, Marina Dabetić.....	628
IS DIGITAL GOVERNMENT THE FUTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?.....	634
Cristina Criste PhD student, Sorana Vătavu , Ciel Man Masters, Oana-Ramona Lobonț.....	634
PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES OF BIOLOGISTS IN THE LABOR MARKET OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA.....	635
Bojana Link, Maja Pločo, Emilija Hrapović, Adna Mesihović.....	635

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES.....	641
Slavoljub Šljivić, Maja Staletović, Amer Rastić.....	641
ANIMATION IN ECOTOURISM.....	648
Slobodanka Stankov, Radomir Stojanović, Branko Radeljić.....	648
LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF PLAGIARISM AND OTHER FORMS OF MISCONDUCT IN THE CREATION OF NEW SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE IN RUSSIA.....	654
Irina N. Ainoutdinova, Karina A. Ainoutdinova.....	654
MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM AS A REQUIREMENT OF INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS.....	661
Predrag Pavličević.....	661
THE IMPACT OF CREATIVITY ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT.....	666
Slađana Vujičić, Oliver Momčilović, Ljiljana Tomić, Aleksandra Mesarović, Biljana Dimitrić..	666
A THOROUGH OVERVIEW OF THE RELATION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND CLIMATE CHANGE RISK - A SYSTEMATIC, BIBLIOMETRIC AND CONTENT ANALYSIS.....	673
Ciel Man, Raluca-Ioana Răcățăian, Cristina Criste, Nicoleta-Claudia Moldovan.....	673
FINANCIAL CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION.....	687
Milica Ničić.....	687
THE ROLE OF PACKAGING DESIGN AND INFLUENCE ON CUSTOMERS WHEN SELLING PRODUCTS.....	694
Petra Tanović, Martina Balaška.....	594
PERSPECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WINE TOURISM IN THE FOREST REGION..	704
Marko M. Pavlović, Marija Perić, Radomir Stojanović, Marijana R. Milunović, Đorđe Pavlović.....	704
BALANCING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS IN OPTIMIZED SOLID BIOFUEL MANUFACTURING.....	710
Simina MARIS , Mirela GOJE, Ștefan Alfred MARIȘ, Doina DARVASI, Alexandra ȘUTA.....	710
Navigating Cultural Dynamics: Unraveling the Impact on Organizational Behavior and Management Practices.....	716
Enes Hamzagic, Aleksandra Golubovic Stojanovic.....	716
DECODING DNA: COMPUTATIONAL TECHNIQUES IN COVID-19 RESEARCH.....	727
Tamara Savić, Tijana Savić, Lazar Kopanja.....	727
SPECIFICITIES OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.....	736
dr Gordana Jovanović, mr Vesna Simović, dr Milan Veselinović, dr Mirjana Mrvaljević, dr Ana Matović.....	736

E-learning system of The School of Electrical and Computer Engineering in Belgrade: experiences and challenges.....	741
Goran Šimić, Ana Miletić, Jelena Mitić, Borislav Đorđević, Slobodanka Đenić.....	741
FRAUDS IN THE HEALTH CARE OF SERBIA - FORENSIC ASPECT.....	750
Zvezdan Đurić, Dragan Cvetković, Olivera Đurić.....	750
EXPORT FINANCING.....	758
Tatjana Piljan, Aleksandra Golubović-Stojanović.....	758
ELASTICITY OF DEMAND IN SERBIAN HOTEL INDUSTRY.....	768
Saša Mašić.....	768
ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTHUSIASM AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT: AN ANALYSIS OF YOUTH PERSPECTIVES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA.....	775
Luka Petrović Dragan Bjelica Marko Mihić.....	775
Crowdfunding, principles and methods.....	780
Milan Vukasovic.....	780
The Impact of the "Memory Effect" Model in Irregular Migration on Public Spending.....	784
Iliuta Cumpanasu.....	784
Business etiquette and organizational culture as the backbone of business success.....	790
Aleksandra Golubović-Stojanović, Tatjana Piljan.....	790
DIGITAL ECONOMY IN SERBIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES.....	801
Tiana Anđelković, Milica Stanković, Gordana Mrdak.....	801
INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL IN THE FUNCTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION....	807
Nemanja Lekić, Slavica Mandić, Snežana Lekić.....	807
INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO STUDENTS' CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN TOURISM FIELD.....	812
Milenko D. Djuric, Maja Cosic.....	812
THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL MARKET REQUIREMENTS AS AN INITIATOR FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW GENERATION OF OPTIONS.....	817
Dimitrov Filip, Mile Samardžić.....	817
SECTION 3: ARTS.....	824
APPLICATION OF DIGITAL STICKERS WITHIN THE VIBER APPLICATION.....	825
Sibila Petenji Arbutina, Karolina Mudrinski Palanački, Srđan Dimitrov, Tamara Šurbat.....	825
METaverse EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHING METHOD.....	831
Semir Poturak.....	831
BRIDGING ART, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND INNOVATION: INSIGHTS FROM THE CREATIVE NEXUS INITIATIVE.....	841
Milena Ilić Dragan Čalović Biljana Viduka Vladana Radnović Marko Pavlović.....	841
DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD OF SHOE DESIGN.....	845

Maja Milinić Bogdanović.....	845
Project based education - 3D modeling.....	850
Vladimir Alander.....	850
ARCHITECTURE IN 1:1 SCALE Educational approaches to trans-disciplinarity of architectural design.....	857
Bojana Jerković-Babović.....	857
DESIGN EDUCATION FOR A NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS INITIATIVE.....	864
Dragan Čalović.....	869
SECTION 4: LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSE.....	879
TEACHING AND TESTING PRODUCTIVE LANGUAGE SKILLS.....	880
Jelena Jovičić, Valentina Mikluc, Nenad Jeremić.....	880
APPLICATION OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS IN TEACHING LANGUAGES OF PROFESSION IN HOSPITALITY.....	887
Andrea Žerajić, Petar Minić.....	887
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL ADAPTATION ON THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY IN CHINA.....	893
Hui Cheng, Xu Xu.....	893
English Language as a Platform for Courses on Academic Writing in Higher Education.....	898
Tara Pešić Vesna Jokanović.....	898
HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY: STUDENTS' READINESS TO WORK IN PUBLISHING.....	904
Sonja Lero Maksimović.....	904
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCORPORATING ONLINE TEACHING MATERIALS IN ESP LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR TOURISM STUDENTS BASED ON LEARNER SATISFACTION ANALYSIS DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 CRISIS.....	916
Milina Kosanović.....	916
NAVIGATING LINGUISTIC HORIZONS: A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF AVIATION STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF APPLIED STUDIES AVIATION ACADEMY IN BELGRADE, SERBIA.....	923
Dragana Raičević Bajić , Danijela Manić , Dragana Rankov.....	923
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS.....	930
Anna Stefanowicz-Kocoł.....	930
ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR BUSINESS INFORMATICS STUDENTS.....	945
Maja Cvijetić, Mirjana Nikolić, Dejan Savičević.....	945
CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION.....	951
Ivana Marinković.....	951
EXPLORING THE EXPLICITNESS OF TEACHER FEEDBACK IN ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE....	956

Tamara Verežan, Maja S. Vukadinović.....	956
TEACHER FEEDBACK FEATURES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE.....	962
Tamara Verežan.....	962
LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES AT THE COLLEGE OF TOURISM IN BELGRADE: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS IN TEACHING GERMAN.....	969
Ivana Stojanovic.....	969

KNOWLEDGE OF TOURISM STUDENTS - CASE STUDY: CULTURAL-ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF SERBIA

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Abstract: The paper presents the results of research conducted among students of the Academy of Vocational Studies in Sumadija, department of Arandjelovac, majoring in management in tourism, as part of basic vocational studies. The research was based on the analysis of whether there are enough subjects dealing with the cultural and artistic heritage and the heritage of the past in Serbia, the interest of students in contemporary cultural and artistic events in Serbia and the contribution of the material on the cultural and artistic heritage of Serbia that is presented to students within the existing teaching plans, researching the impact of materials on cultural-historical and artistic heritage on the understanding of contemporary cultural-artistic trends, the impact of teaching content on cultural-artistic heritage on the understanding of the importance of culture and art for the development of tourism in Serbia, as well as the role that professional trips and student internships have on knowledge of the cultural and artistic heritage of Serbia, but also the influence that material on the country's cultural-historical and artistic heritage within the curriculum has on frequent visits to monasteries as important sacred tourist resources of Serbia.

Keywords: knowledge, students, tourism, heritage, culture, art, Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultural-artistic heritage on the territory of Serbia is very diverse due to the intertwining of different cultures of the peoples who took turns in this area. Their traces are visible even today not only through material remains but also through spiritual heritage. Archaeological sites with their material remains testify that the territory of today's Serbia was inhabited in prehistoric times. The Roman Empire, Byzantium, the spread of Christianity had a significant influence on the development of culture and the formation of Serbia's heritage, and with the arrival of the Ottomans, the people came into contact with oriental culture. The migration of people to the north led to the gradual acceptance of European cultural patterns. [1]. All these numerous layers of culture deposited on the territory of today's Serbia represent fertile ground for the development of cultural tourism, and students' familiarity with the diversity and importance of cultural and artistic heritage enables the formation of professional staff who equally know, respect and know how to use the economic and touristic potential that richly heritage of a country offers.

Knowledge of culture and cultural heritage (their importance, preservation, promotion, use in tourism) is included in the program of basic vocational studies of the study program Management in Tourism of the Academy of Vocational Studies in Sumadija, with a special focus on the cultural-artistic heritage of Serbia, as well as social-historical circumstances in which culture developed and cultural-artistic contents were created.

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2. THE CULTURAL-ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF SERBIA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

Cultural heritage is created as a by-product of community functioning, which is why it is characteristic of a given community and represents a valuable resource for the development of tourism. If it is authentic, cultural heritage can provide a tourist destination with a sustainable competitive advantage [2].

Culture and tourism have become more closely connected in recent years. Interest in culture and cultural programs is constantly growing. Tourists are increasingly interested in different cultures, performing arts, crafts, rituals, gastronomy and interpretation of nature and the universe. The growth of cultural tourism is also reflected in financial indicators. The growing trend of interest in cultural tourism provides an opportunity for cultural heritage as a development resource to become sustainable, bringing benefits to the local and wider community with the precondition of its preservation [3].

It is estimated that cultural tourists spend one third more than the average tourist consumption [4]. The most developed countries of the world promote their cultural heritage for the purposes of tourism and make a great effort for its understanding and promotion, while countries in transition (like Serbia) do this insufficiently, although they have great potential as countries of cultural tourism [5].

The World Tourism Organization regards cultural tourism as one of the most significant tourism market niches. There exists a close link between the cultural and tourism sectors. Culture is essential for tourism, but it must also be seen as a vital element in preserving and fostering national pride and identity. Successful collaboration between these two sectors is crucial for the development of cultural tourism [6].

Thanks to the cultural heritage, numerous European and world destinations are characterized by a very high level of development of localities that promote cultural content and attractions. Cultural values and landmarks from different historical eras attract an increasing number of tourists as well as interest in cultural tourism. This type of tourism, in addition to the basic content, is mostly enriched with additional ones, which has a great impact on attendance and promotion of the local environment, but also on further tourism development and improvement of the area with infrastructure [7].

The rich cultural-historical heritage of Serbia, along with its intangible cultural assets reflected in oral tradition, folklore, religion, customs, celebrations, artistic expressions, and traditional crafts, represents a significant part of Serbia's national and cultural identity. Building Serbia's national and tourist brand involves utilizing all elements that positively contribute to creating a comprehensive portrayal of Serbia as an attractive destination [8].

Cultural needs in tourism are constantly evolving, influencing changes in tourist demand. Tourism, in all its manifestations, brings cultures and nations closer together, facilitating interweaving, assimilation, and intersections among cultural spheres and levels. Therefore, cultural-historical monuments and cultural heritage, in general, shouldn't merely be seen as parts of historical legacy but should also be integrated and valued within contemporary tourism trends. Tourism and culture are recognized as two potent drivers of global development. Thus, the significance of cultural-historical monuments is paramount for the tourism development of any destination. Cultural tourism is an essential component of cultural heritage, impacting the overall development of humanity. Serbia has always been a crossroads of many paths: geographically and historically. Hence, these areas exhibit some of the oldest monuments of world civilization [9].

The Central Register of immovable cultural properties of the Republic Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments currently lists 2635 immovable cultural properties, comprising 2267 cultural monuments, 93 spatial cultural-historical units, 196 archaeological sites, and 79 notable places [10].

In higher education within the field of tourism in Serbia, there's a need to promote a new dimension, emphasizing inter-institutional collaboration, integrated study programs, various training, and research. When designing changes in higher education in tourism, considerations should encompass integrating education and the economy, current learning outcomes, introducing new subject areas, and

student experiences. Tourism graduates should possess specific skills alongside theoretical knowledge. Therefore, reform in higher education in tourism should aim to enhance flexibility and the effectiveness of the educational process [11].

3. CASE STUDY

This case study includes a survey conducted at the Academy of Professional Studies Sumadija, Department in Arandjelovac, among students of basic professional studies majoring in Tourism management. All fifty students from all three years participated in the survey, with females dominating the gender structure (see Table 1 for their gender and year of study structure).

Table 1. The number of participants in the survey classified by year of study and gender.

	I year	II year	III year	Total
Male	1	3	5	9
Female	19	9	13	41

The survey presented six statements (given in Table 2) regarding the influence of teaching content and materials on cultural heritage (including visits to cultural heritage monuments) on interest in and understanding of contemporary cultural and artistic events. The questionnaire had Likert-type responses graded 1 to 5, where grade 1 denotes the student's strong disagreement, and grade 5 represents strong agreement with the statements. Since responses represent ordinal data, we used nonparametric descriptive statistics to analyze attitudes about individual statements [12].

Table 2. Statements and their labels given in the survey.

Label	Statement
A	During our studies, we have enough subjects dealing with the cultural and artistic heritage and heritage of the past in Serbia.
B	The material on cultural-historical and artistic heritage within the curriculum expands my interests in contemporary cultural and artistic events in Serbia.
C	The material on cultural-historical and artistic heritage within the curriculum has a positive effect on my understanding of contemporary cultural-artistic trends.
D	Teaching content on cultural and artistic heritage helped me to understand the importance of culture and art for the development of tourism in Serbia.
E	The trips and internships of the students have a positive effect on my knowledge of the cultural and artistic heritage of Serbia.
F	The material on cultural-historical and artistic heritage within the curriculum has a positive effect on my more frequent visits to monasteries outside of school.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Close examination of questions in Table 2 implies that there exist two sets of statements: the first set (*A – D*) relates teaching materials and themes to the subject's perception of modern trends in art and culture, and the second group (*E, F*) concentrates on its opinion on visits (tours) to heritage monuments.

Table 3 summarizes survey results (see also Figure 1), their central tendencies (median *Mdn* and mode *MO*), and measures of variability expressed as interquartile range (*IQR*). Response distributions for all statements are negatively skewed, with *Mdn* equal to 4 or 5 and narrow *IQR* (typically equal to 1). Broader response distribution (*IQR* = 2) is obtained for statement *A*. Mode is equal to 5 for all except the statement *C*, for which it is 4. High response scores and narrow distributions indicate that students tend to (strongly) agree with the declarations given in Table 2.

Table 3. Survey results: response scores, and their corresponding median (*Mdn*) value, interquartile range (*IQR*) and mode (*MO*)

Label/Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Median (<i>Mdn</i>)	Interquartile range (<i>IQR</i>)	Mode (<i>MO</i>)
<i>A</i>	2	5	12	13	18	4	2	5
<i>B</i>	0	0	7	17	26	5	1	5
<i>C</i>	0	0	5	24	21	4	1	4
<i>D</i>	0	0	7	8	35	5	1	5
<i>E</i>	2	2	6	7	33	5	1	5
<i>F</i>	2	1	9	14	24	4	1	5

According to our study, participants tend to agree (*A*: *Mdn* = 4, *IQR* = 2) that they have enough topics dealing with the cultural, historical, and artistic heritage of Serbia. They strongly support (*B*: *Mdn* = 5, *IQR* = 1) the statement that their curriculum material on that legacy expands their interests in contemporary cultural and artistic events in Serbia. They agree (*C*: *Mdn* = 4, *IQR* = 1) that the curriculum material positively affected their understanding of modern trends in art and culture. Students found teaching content on cultural and artistic heritage valuable (*D*: *Mdn* = 5, *IQR* = 1) for understanding the importance of culture and art for tourism development in Serbia.

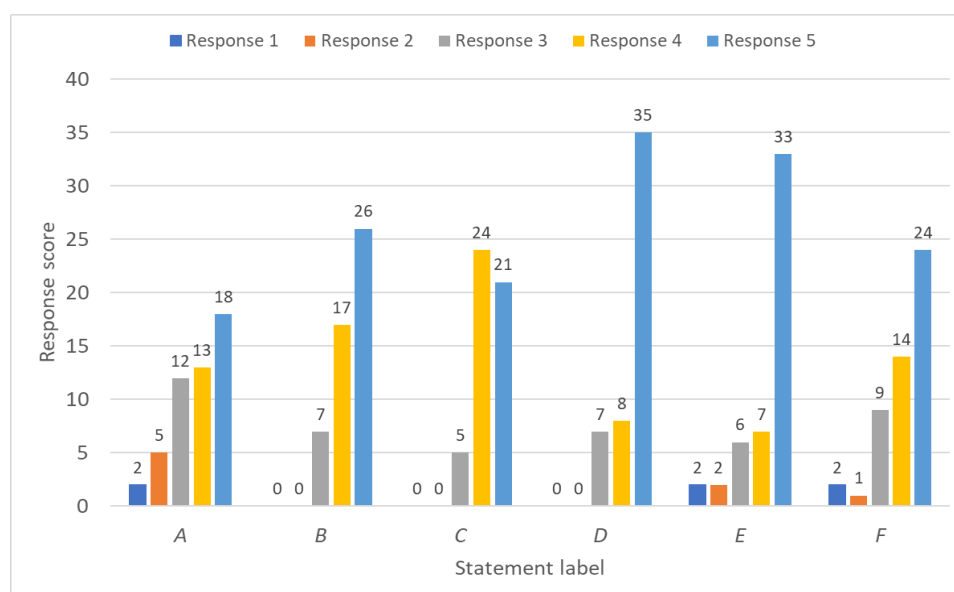


Figure 1. Response (1 – 5) scores (Table 3.) for all statements (A – E).

The subjects strongly agree (*E*: *Mdn* = 5, *IQR* = 1) that the excursions and internships positively affect their knowledge of the cultural and artistic heritage of Serbia, but to a somewhat lesser extent (*F*: *Mdn* = 4, *IQR* = 1) agree the Academia curriculum induces more frequent visits to cultural heritage monuments, in particular, monasteries.

We also performed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in Python to find latent variables (factors) [12] and check our intuition on the existence of two subgroups of statements. Although the data set is too small to draw firm conclusions from EFA [13], we still carried out that procedure. Before conducting EFA, one needs to check if a correlation between variables exists using the Bartlett sphericity test. We obtained $\chi^2 = 69$ and a *p-value* close to zero, meaning that the uncertainty that the variables are not correlated is low. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test measures the data adequacy for EFA by probing the partial correlation between the variables. The obtained KMO value equal to 0.74 is in the range average values. Two latent variables were detected using EFA as anticipated by

intuition. The first factor relates to statements $A - E$, while the second links to the other group (E, F). The first factor has loadings 0.43, 0.64, 0.72, and 0.63, and the second 0.76 and 0.73.

5. CONCLUSION

Teaching and planning adequate curricula in the field of tourism at the level of the Academy of Vocational Studies is neither an easy nor a simple task. It is necessary for students of tourism to be connected at all times with current trends on the modern market, as well as with social events. The teaching staff should be aware of the importance of integration of education and inter-institutional cooperation with other areas of importance for tourism.

Serbia's rich and diverse anthropogenic resources due to its long history, which are important for tourism development, make research of this kind crucial for the country's future growth. Research and development in changes in modern higher education in the country is also critical, following interdisciplinary dialogue, critical thinking and innovation which represent an important segment in the future development of higher education and education in the field of tourism.

The recommendations of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) are in favor of accelerated development, among other special forms of tourism and cultural, artistic and various specific types of tourism based on the heritage that inherits the past. In this regard, the importance of permanent monitoring of the level of knowledge and interest of tourism students in the cultural and artistic heritage of Serbia, as well as innovation in the development sector of various organizational and management tools, which will undeniably contribute to proper guidance in the field of higher education in the tourism sector, strengthening the role of national identity through the preservation and representation of teaching programs and tourism education plans that concern the nurturing of Serbia's cultural and artistic heritage, but also monitoring contemporary trends that are current on the international tourism market.

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