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MACEDONIAN TOURIST PRODUCT: CURRENT STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is about Macedonian tourist offer. Many countries have developed their own tourist product in direction to attract more tourist in destination. They work intensively to rebuild attractive factors, to improve communications and increase quality accommodation facilities. The quality tourist product has strong influence of the destination attracting a lot of foreign tourist

In 2008, Macedonian government put tourism product as a main focus in its policy. The government make a essential document Strategy for development of Tourism in Macedonia from 2009–2013. The results of that document give some actions how to be improve Macedonian tourist product. Upon the preparation of the strategy for the development of tourism, the tourist economy with its experience was not actively involved. Because of that, strategy was not implemented completely. This paper presents an action research conducted on a sample of 65 tourist stockholders (travel agencies and hotels) in Macedonia in 2013. This study analyze Macedonian tourist offer. What is done and what should be done in the future in name what other countries have undertaken regarding the aspect of promotion of their tourist product, concerning promotion of their tourist destination and what Macedonia has undertaken and should undertake regarding that aspect.

Keywords: tourism, foreign tourists, tourist offer, Macedonia, perspectives.

Jel Classification: L83

INTRODUCTION

Managing customer experiences is critical to the success of hospitality businesses in today's economic climate and competitive environment (Miao and Mattila 2013). Tourism industry is habitually defined as a hypercompetitive sector, characterized by high radical and abrupt technological changes, shows an increasing variety and variability as much as an overwhelming in demand and globalization (Della Corte 2012). Tourism product is a group of components or elements brought together in a 'bundle' to

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satisfy the consumer's need. A tourism product is anything that can be offered for attraction, acquisition or consumption. It includes physical objects, services, personalities, places, organizations and ideas (Gautam 2014). All tourist value should be in join correlation to create tourist service which will satisfied tourist needs (Blazeska 2014). Tourist product can be determined on two distinct levels: the total tourist product comprises a combination of all elements, which tourist consumes during his/her trip and the specific products are components of the total tourist product and can be sold as individual offerings such as accommodation, transport, attractions and other facilities for tourists (Koutoulas 2004). According to Huang, Hsu and Chan (2009) tourist satisfaction was conceptualized to include three aspects/layers: satisfaction with guiding service, satisfaction with tour services, and satisfaction with the overall tour experience. Macedonia's tourism product is a rich combination of cultural and natural heritage, which is characterized by wide spacious landscape of lakes and mountain view, many of which have distance and relative peace that can rarely be found in the world of the 21st century according to National Strategy for development of Tourism in R. Macedonia, (2009–2013).

1. MACEDONIAN TOURIST OFFER

Macedonia is a small landlocked country, covering an area of 25713 km², and is bounded to the west by Albania, Kosovo and Serbia to the north, Bulgaria to the east and Greece to the south. In mid-2010 Macedonia had 2,072,086 inhabitants. Macedonia has a central and strategic transit position, linking the eastern Mediterranean Europe.

The diversity of tourist resources of Macedonia, also located in its natural heritage, enriched by diverse landscapes and climates. The country has more than 50 lakes of varying size, three national parks. Tourist resources of Macedonia are present in its spiritual traditions and human heritage. Rich gastronomic and wine tradition of Macedonia, its traditional music, cultural festivals and celebrations, all supported by different historical and cultural influences, forming multicultural identity of Macedonia and are themselves authentic tourist resource. In terms of the diversity and richness of its cultural heritage and natural resources, Macedonia today has a wide range of different potentials to offer various forms of tourism such as: cultural, lakeside, mountain, lake, rural, urban, spa and wine tourism.

Macedonia's tourism product is a rich combination of cultural and natural heritage, which is characterized by wide spacious landscape of lakes and mountain view, many of which have distance and relative peace that can rarely be found in the world of the 21st century (National Strategy for development of Tourism in R. Macedonia 2009–2013). According to Barros and Asaff (2012) accommodation characteristics and destination attributes (accommodation range, events, food quality, expected weather beach, overall quality, reputation, and safety) have a positive and significant impact on the probability of returning to the city.

The research presented in this paper is conducted on Republic of Macedonia as a tourist destination and promotional activities realized to strengths the brand of Macedonia abroad. Result of those activities is increasing the number of foreign tourist in the country. It includes survey by random choice on 65 tourist stockholders (travel agencies and hotels) in Macedonia in 2013. The survey was made in may 2013. Data for this study were collected through a self-administrated questionnaire distributed to 65

major tourist stock holders in Macedonia. Respondents were approached face-to-face. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions: 3 questions concerning the trip characteristics (firm, place where is situated, main activities); 4 socio-demographic (area of action, employers, licence or categorization, period of existing on the market) and 8 questions concerning the Macedonian tourist offer. The questions have scale of answers completely disagree, agree slightly, agree, significantly agree and completely agree.

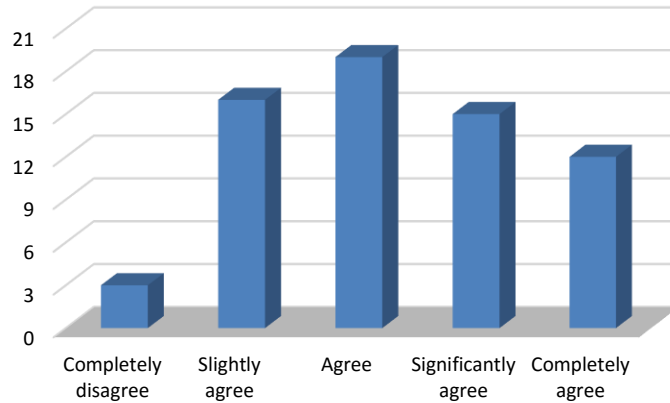


Figure 1. The Republic of Macedonia has a good tourist offer

Table 1. Respondents' answers to a question that the Republic of Macedonia has a good tourist offer

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
3	16	19	15	12

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (29.2%) agree with the stance that the Republic of Macedonia has a good tourist offer.

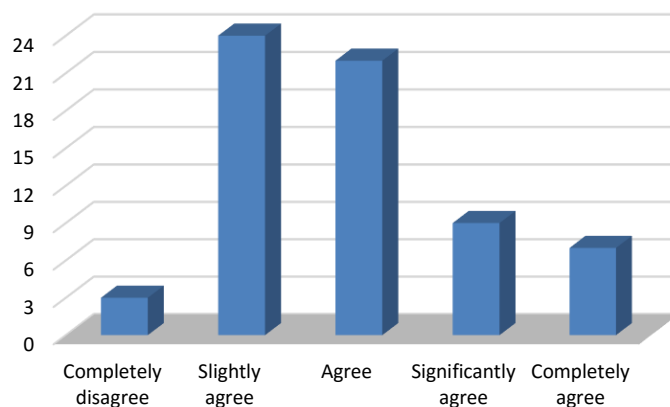


Figure 2. The Republic of Macedonia has a sufficient number of hotel capacities

Table 2. Respondents' answers to a question about sufficient number of hotel capacities in the Republic of Macedonia

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
3	24	22	9	7

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (36.9%) agree slightly with the stance that the Republic of Macedonia has a sufficient number of hotel capacities

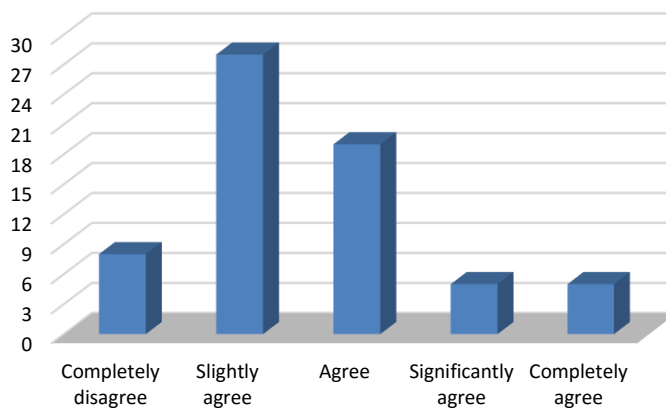


Figure 3. Hotels in the Republic of Macedonia meet the European standards

Table 3. Respondents' answers to a question about question that Hotels in the Republic of Macedonia meet the European standards

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
8	28	19	5	5

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (43.1%) agree slightly with the stance that hotels in the Republic of Macedonia meet the European standards

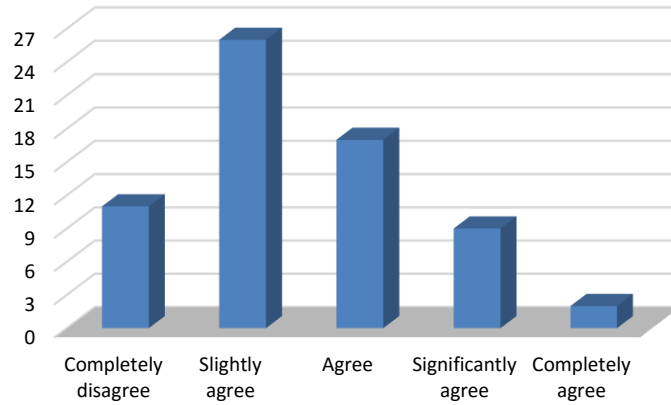


Figure 4. The service that is offered by the hotels correlates to their categorization

Table 4. Respondents' answers to the question that service that is offered by the hotels correlates to their categorization

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
11	26	17	9	2

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (40%) agree slightly with the stance that the service that is offered by the hotels correlates to their categorization

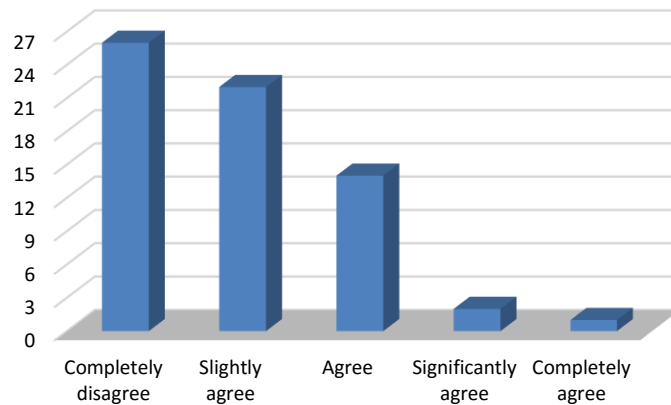


Figure 5. Hotels offer additional entertainment content

Table 5. Respondents' answers to the question that service that Hotels offer additional entertainment content

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
26	22	14	2	1

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (40%) completely disagree with the stance that hotels offer additional entertainment content

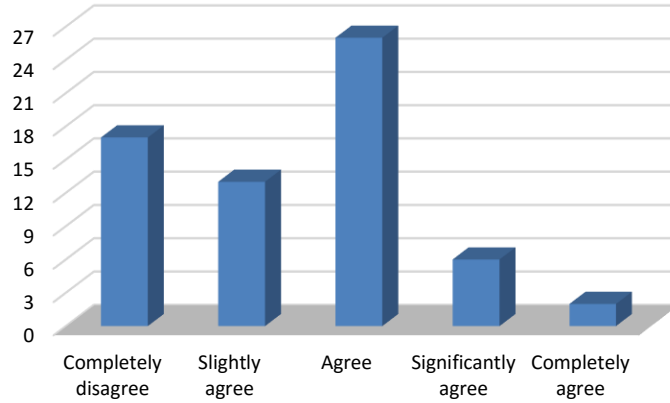


Figure 6: The air traffic to the Republic of Macedonia is organized with a developed network

Table 6. Respondents' answers to the question that service that the air traffic to the Republic of Macedonia is organized with a developed network

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
17	13	26	6	2

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (40.6%) agree with the stance that the air traffic to the Republic of Macedonia is organized with a developed network

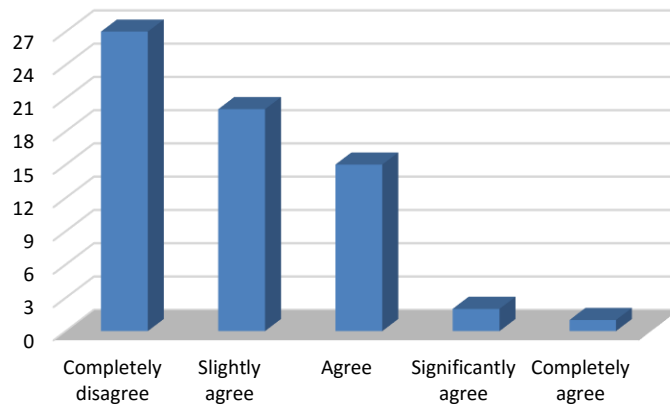


Figure 7. The road infrastructure in the Republic of Macedonia has a European quality

Table 7. Respondents' answers to the question that service that the road infrastructure in the Republic of Macedonia has a European quality

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
27	20	15	2	1

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (41.5%) completely disagree with the stance the road infrastructure in the Republic of Macedonia has a European quality. Except quality roads great impact on service have tourist maps (Yan and Lee 2015).

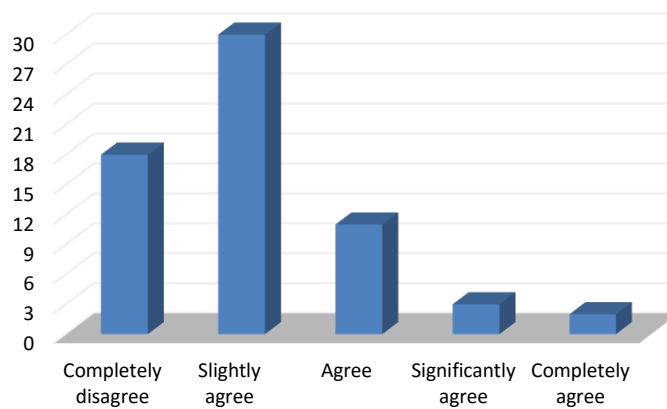


Figure 8. The tourist spots in the Republic of Macedonia have a developed tourist infrastructure

Table 8. Respondents' answers to the question that tourist spots that Republic of Macedonia has a developed tourist infrastructure

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
27	20	15	2	1

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (46.9%) agree slightly with the stance that the tourist spots in the Republic of Macedonia have a developed tourist infrastructure.

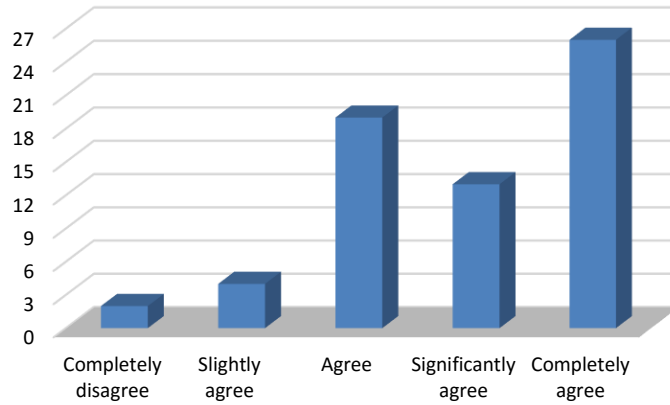


Figure 9. The food in the Republic of Macedonia is a good tourist offer

Table 9. Respondents' answers to the question that the food in the Republic of Macedonia is a good tourist offer

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
2	4	19	13	26

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (40.6%) completely agree with the stance that the food in the Republic of Macedonia is a good tourist offer

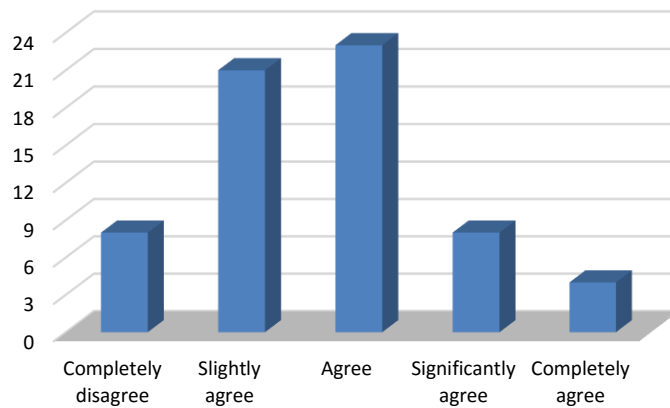


Figure 10. The employee service in hospitality is of good quality

Table 10. Respondents' answers to the question that the food in the Republic of Macedonia is a good tourist offer

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
8	21	23	8	4

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (35.9%) agree with the stance that the employee service in hospitality is of good quality

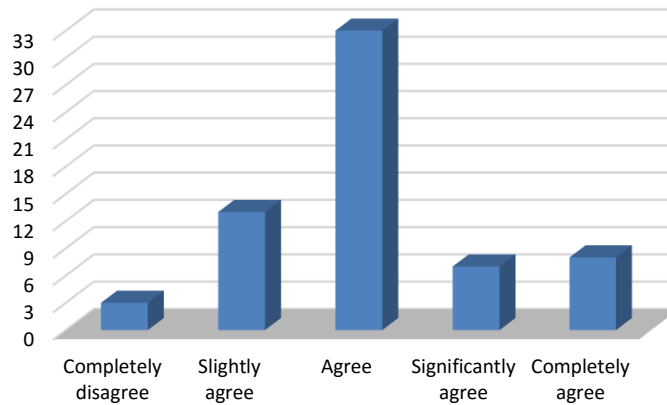


Figure 11. Travel agency employees are quality staff

Table 11. Respondents' answers to the question that the travel agency employees are quality staff

Completely disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Significantly agree	Completely agree
3	13	33	7	8

According to the acquired results it can be concluded that vast majority of respondents (51.6%) agree with the stance that travel agency employees are quality staff. More about importance of employees in Hospitality industry in Solnet, Kralj and Baum (2015).

CONCLUSION

The Republic of Macedonia has a good tourist offer. The presented results indicate the following conclusions: Republic of Macedonia has not a sufficient number of hotel capacities. After the transition in Macedonia many hotel facilities were ruined, most of them closed. In the next period is necessary to open large and quality hotel facilities. Hotels in the Republic of Macedonia not meet the European standards. Hotels must follow European standards by getting the franchise famous brands of hotels. This will fulfill the requirements of tourists for quality accommodation. The service that is offered by the hotels is not correlates to their categorization. Improving service hotel accommodations at every level is necessary. Knowledge of foreign languages staff, vocational education, kindness and dedication in carrying out tasks necessary for providing quality service. Hotels does not offer additional entertainment content.

The air traffic to the Republic of Macedonia is organized with a developed network. Macedonia have two airports, one in Ohrid and other is in Skopje. The government in 2008 gives airports on concession to TAV airports from Turkey. TAV airports rebuild

airport in Skopje and modernize tea airport in Ohrid. Also government started with subvention in air traffic establishing more and chipper destination by lowcost carrier Wiz air. The road infrastructure in the Republic of Macedonia has not a European quality. Rebuilding new highways connecting Ohrid and Skopje will make a lot of tourist to come in Ohrid as a tourist destination. The food in the Republic of Macedonia is a good tourist offer. The employee service in hospitality is a good quality. Travel agency employees are quality staff. Republic of Macedonia should continue to improve Macedonian tourist product. It should rebuild new attractions, new highways and new quality hotel capacity.

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