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CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF TOURISM

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Abstract:

Tourism is an economic activity that is very sensitive to social, economic, political and security changes. Such changes can be both positive and negative. These may be in the tourist destination or the area from where the tourists come from. The changes may affect tourists, tourism workers, travel companies, stakeholders, the domicile population, the local community, etc. Tourism in the Republic of North Macedonia is no exception and is not immune to such changes. Ongoing changes that may occur are a challenge for the entire tourism industry but also for tourist destinations when it comes to their management and development. The authors aim in the paper to present the modern challenges of tourism in the country, and to propose models and new ways of understanding the need for flexible and adaptable tourist offers that will meet the contemporary challenge.

Keywords: tourism destination, tourism offer, policy, development

JEL classification: L83; Z32; I15; O18

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is changeable and dynamic, activity, adaptable to the contemporary needs of society. The factors that influence the change of tourism are various. Lifestyle, urbanization, standard of living, industrialization, working hours, transport, internet, safety, human health and many others factors as well affect tourism. When we talk about tourism today, we are actually talking about trends that will affect the medium and long-term plans for tourism development in the future. Global tourism will continue to grow along with world prosperity and well-being, but will be strongly influenced by contemporary trends such as: socio-demographic trends; economic trends expressed through declining poverty and a growing middle class; technological revolution and evolution; digitalization of tourism; health and healthy lifestyle; political tensions; security; threats of terrorism, etc.

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In terms of socio-demographic trend, the aging population is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market. In 2050, 21% of the world's population is projected to be over the age of 60, and the majority will be in Europe, America and Asia, which are the most important emitting tourist destinations. This age group of tourists is characterized by some common features: they are financially secure, more purchasing power, free time, need for health and wellness trips, etc.

In addition to the mentioned socio-demographic trends, the presence of the Millennium Generation Y is especially important, which is expected to represent 50% of all travelers by 2025, the focus of this generation is research, interaction and emotional experience, and expect a greater connection between tourist services and everyday life. Also in the future, the impact of the Post-Millennium Generation Z on tourism will become crucial, as it is a generation that is fully integrated into the digital world, which will require a significant adjustment of the tourism sector.

Poverty reduction and the growing middle class will also have an impact on tourism. The middle class is expected to reach a population of 3.2 billion by 2021, while by 2030 that number will increase to 4.9 billion, so this increase in the middle class will significantly change the profile of the international tourist / traveler. With the growing middle class and their search for tourist offers that offer value for money and different tourist interests, there is a need for connection of destinations which in the future will be a very important trend in tourist travel.

The technological revolution and digitalization are trends that greatly influence the changes and shaping the future offer in tourism. The tourism industry is strongly influenced by the progress of technology, due to which the entire tourism industry must adopt new technological trends, rethink its strategies and reshape the way it provides its services.

At the same time, the importance of social networks in tourism is increasing. Facing our lives online today is more of a standard than a novelty. SoMo (Social + Mobile) (social networks + mobile phones) are channels that are part of our daily lives, so generally today the leisure process begins and ends with the Internet.

A particularly important segment of modern trends is taking care of the personal health of the modern tourist, it means prevention which is one of the key factors for improving health. Therefore, the integrated cooperation between the health and tourism sector in the future will open new opportunities for health tourism. For tourist destinations that will want to meet the needs of these tourists, a key step will be the integration of the additional offer in the destination, in order to create a homogeneous offer.

One of the priorities of the tourism industry in the future must be the safety in tourism from all aspects. The challenges in this area that need to be addressed by tourism are: ethnic, cultural, religious differences that lead to different tensions; political unrest; military actions; threats of terrorism; transport uncertainty; long security procedures at airports, etc.

Tourism is growing at a phenomenal rate and is one of the key socio-economic drivers around the world, thus affecting world development, prosperity and well-being. It is therefore necessary to monitor the future development of these trends and to achieve long-term sustainability in tourism through a balanced relationship between economic, environmental and social pillars, which is a continuous process that requires the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

Tourist offer of the Republic of Macedonia is still too traditional, i.e. it mostly consists of summer mass tourism and winter tourism as a major tourist forms. As a result of such tourist offer it is normal to have weak or insufficient tourism development in the state, which through statistical indicators will be presented in the paper. The authors in the analysis of this unsatisfactory situation proceed from the assumption that the level on which tourism is placed in the country largely depends on tourism product which is offered on the modern tourist that in terms of the product is becoming increasingly fastidious. This leads to the thinking that enrichment and expansion of the tourism product is necessary but with greater participation of some of the specific tourism forms. Such alternative authors perceive in manifestations - events, which with their specifics should contribute to the enrichment of the tourist product, the dispersion of tourist offer through other cities in the country as opposed to the current concentration in few cities - tourist destinations, time dispersion of tourist movement or initiation of tourist movement throughout the year. The great impact on events is emphasized by multiple authors. The world tourism, a growing importance is given to the event as a tourist product, which is best manifested through the new trends in the tourist supply aimed at increasing the interest in learning about cultures, customs and traditions of different countries and areas (Susic and Djordzevic 2011). In order manifestations - events in the Republic of Macedonia to become a major part of the tourism product, strategic management is necessary their and of course the appropriate PR - approach and strategy.

1. METODOLOGY

The methodological approach in the preparation of this paper consists of two parts. In the first part an analysis of the current level of tourism comprehension in the Republic of Macedonia is made, which is expressed through tourism statistical indicators, while in the second part solutions that should enrich and supplement tourism product of the country taken as a whole as a tourist destination are offered.

In preparing the paper more scientific research methods are used in order to obtain relevant results, such methods are: a statistical method for statistical presentation of data, comparative method to compare data, methods of analysis and synthesis with whose application the collected data have been processed, graphical methods for presentation of the results and so on.

2. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST ARRIVALS AND OVERNIGHTS

The main indicators that indicate the level of tourism development in the Republic of Macedonia are the number of tourist arrivals, the number of realized tourist overnights and realized tourist turnover i.e. tourist consumption.

Table 1. Tourist arrivals in the period from 2009 to 2019

Year	Tourist arrivals		
	Total	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists
2009	465.015	299.709	165.306
2010	509.706	312.490	197.216
2011	499.473	297.116	202.357
2012	536.212	306.132	230.080
2013	605.320	350.363	254.957
2014	587.770	328.566	259.204
2015	586.241	324.545	261.696
2016	647.568	320.097	327.471
2017	663.633	312.274	351.359
2018	701.794	302.114	399.680
2019	735.650	310.336	425.314

Source: Data from Statistical review: Transport, tourism and other services.
 2020. State statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia. 2020: 11, table 01.

From the data presented in Table 1, it is immediately evident that the general increase in the number of tourists who have visited the Republic of Macedonia for the ten-year period that has been processed. The total number of tourists who visit the country in over a year, is the largest in the last year 2019, while the lowest is in the first year that was analyzed i.e. in 2009, but the marked increase in the absolute number is 270 545 tourists i.e. expressed in a percentage it is a growth in the number of tourists for 58.2%. Sizable movement of tourist visits during the ten-year period, is with some oscillations in the period from 2009 to 2015, but then it is noticed a steady increase from 586,241 tourists in 2015, up to 735,650 tourists in 2019, it has increased by 149 409 tourists a year or in terms of percentage this represents an increase of 25.5%. What is particularly important in the analysis of the number of tourists who have visited the destination is the quantity of domestic and foreign tourists; here the data are quite optimistic, particularly in relation to the number of foreign tourists. The dynamics of the number of domestic tourists is quite less, so in 2019 compared to 2009 it has increased by only 10627 tourists expressed in absolute numbers or percentages that is an increase of only 3.5%, while during the examined period oscillations of 297,116 tourists are observed in 2011 and up to 350 363 domestic tourists in 2013, which is the best year in terms of the number of domestic tourists. But the situation is quite different when it comes to foreign tourists visiting the country, so there is an increase in the number and continuity of 165,306 foreign tourists in 2009 when their number increased to 425,314 tourists in 2019, in absolute numbers it is an increase of 260,008 tourists or in percentage it is an increase of 157.3%.

Such a large percentage of the growth in the number of foreign tourists, as well as in the total number of tourists in the ten-year period at a glance is an indicator of great tourist development of the country. However, to get a better idea of tourism development other indicators of tourism development must be analyzed, because tourism growth (*represented as the number of tourists*) does not always have to mean that there are developments that follow up the growth.

The following table presents the indicators of realized tourist overnights per year during the period from 2009 to 2019, which can be seen as the absolute number and so the average length of stay of tourists, which is an important indicator for the analysis of the country's tourism development.

Table 2. Tourist overnight in the period from 2009 to 2019

Year	Tourist overnight stays		
	Total	Domestic tourists	Foreign tourists
2009	1 865 434	1 504 845	360 589
2010	1 970 041	1 527 053	442 988
2011	1 917 395	1 474 550	442 845
2012	2 019 712	1 501 624	518 088
2013	2 235 520	1 648 073	587 447
2014	2 101 606	1 517 810	583 796
2015	2 020 217	1 461 185	559 032
2016	2 173 034	1 417 868	755 166
2017	2 151 692	1 339 946	811 746
2018	2 157 175	1 275 800	881 375
2019	2 195 883	1 273 370	922 513

Source: Data from Statistical review: Transport, tourism and other services.
 2020. State statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia. 2020: 11, table 01.

The data in Table 2, reflected growth in the total number of realized overnight stays by tourists in the analyzed period. That growth expressed in absolute numbers is equal to 330,449 overnight stays in 2019 compared to 2009, which in percentage is 17.7%, if this data is compared to the growth in the number of tourists (Table 1) it may be noticed that the growth of realized nights does not follow the growth of realized tourist visits, the difference is 40.5%. Realized number of overnights by domestic tourists in the analyzed period it is recorded a decline and oscillations in the numbers throughout the period, i.e. in 2009 domestic tourists realized 1,504,845 overnight stays while in the last analyzed year there was a decline of about 231 475 nights, or in percentage it was 15.4%. But the situation with overnights spent by foreign tourists is considerably better, because there is the biggest growth for the analyzed period and is 155.8%, i.e. out of the realized number of 360 589 overnights in 2009, the number increased to 922,513 overnights realized in 2019. The evident growth realized by the foreign tourists is particularly significant in terms of the expected tourist trade (especially foreign exchange earnings) which should monitor the growth of realized overnight stays.

Next indicator of tourism development that can be obtained from the data analysis from Tables 1 and 2 is the average length of stay of tourists, as the total number of tourists and as well as individually on the domestic and foreign tourists. According to these indicators in relation to the total number of tourists, the average length of stay of tourists in 2009 in our country was 4.01 days, while in the last analyzed 2019, the number was 2.98 days, which shows a decrease in the average length of stay tourists to 1.03 days, or in percentage it is a drop of 25.6% which is not negligible. Domestic tourists in 2009 in destinations in the country stayed 5.02 days in average, while in 2019 their average stay was 4.1 days, which is a decrease in the average stay of 0.92 days, or in percentage decrease of 18.3%. The situation is similar among foreign tourists in 2009 staying in the country on average 2.18 days, while in the latest 2019 year; the average length of their stay was 2.16 days, an insignificant decrease.

The last indicator that is important in order to understand the country's tourism development is the realized tourism turnover, that besides being an economic indicator of income from activities it also indicates whether there is a real tourist destination development. The indicators of realized tourism turnover in the last five years from 2015 to 2019 are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Realized tourist turnover in the period from 2010 to 2014

Realized tourist turnover	
Year	Euros
2015	119 746 060
2016	127 302 001
2017	133 001 037
2018	137 118 387
2019	124 208 919

Source: Data from Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia. 2020. State statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia. 2020: 589, table 14.02.1.

The data in Table 3 shows that the realized tourist turnover during the analyzed period, certain oscillations, but it generally marks certain increase in 2019, when the turnover was 119,746,060 Euros, compared to 2015, when the turnover was 124 208 919 Euros, the increase in turnover amounted to 4,462,859 Euros, or in percentage this increase was 3.72%. But it is also important to look at the movement of tourist turnover in the last four years from 2016 to 2019 when a decrease is noted, which is especially emphasized in 2019 compared to 2018 and to 12,909,468 Euros, or in percentage it a decrease of 9.4%.

The analyzed data from Tables 1, 2 and 3, the real conditions are perceived in the tourism development of the country, which indicates the following: in the analyzed period there is a continual increase in the number of tourist overnights and tourist movements, which indicates growth, but when the data for length of stay is analyzed and especially the realized tourism turnover, a decline of the same is noted. This indicates that the country, despite of the growth in the number of tourists who visit, there is no satisfactory tourist development i.e. has a small average length of stay of tourists, which normally results in a reduction of the actual tourist turnover.

3. THE MANIFESTATIONS – AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENRICH THE TOURIST OFFER IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

It is necessary to change the unfavourable spatial distribution of tourist movement in the country i.e. it is necessary to make efforts for a greater dispersion of tourist movement to other areas in the country (statistics recorded as Other resorts), in order to extend the tourist season, to reduce the emphasized seasonal nature of tourism in the country but also at the same time to increase the number of tourist arrivals and the realized tourist turnover. According to the authors it is possible to achieve enrichment of the diversity of the tourist offer in the country, taken as a whole in tourist terms, especially actualizing the events (all kinds of events) that are held in other cities and towns in the country in the Group - Other resorts. Events policy needs to recognize the complexity of stakeholder interests in events, and acknowledge that there are multiple motivations, needs, expectations and attitudes with respect to the development and implementation and management of events (Dredge and Whitford 2010). It means that in the country's tourist offer special attention should be paid to the specific tourism form - Event tourism, which the authors considered as one of the tourist forms through which the goals previously presented can be realized. This thinking is supported by the definition of events tourism

by Yulan Y. Yuan, which event tourism defines as major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short or long term, clearly, event tourism serves as an instrument in facilitating community-building, fostering urban renewal, and spurring tourism development to provide a better quality of life and environment (Yulan 2013). The manifestations that are traditionally held in towns and cities across the country, should be part of the overall tourism product or should be incorporated as an integral part of the tourist offer and thus to present a pull-factor to attract tourists to the destination, whether it comes to tourists who specifically attend the event or for tourists who are already in the country and the event would be an additional attraction, anyway manifestations have positive influence on tourism development at local and regional level. These festivals provide new opportunities to attract visitors to the festivals in order to increase the appeal of a tourist destination (Lopez-Bonilla, Lopez-Bonilla and Sanz-Altamira 2010).

The Republic of Macedonia as a small country, with a emphasized seasonal nature of the tourism movement and spatial concentration of tourists to several destinations, it should use the ethno-social characteristics of the population which is expressed through manifestations which are quite numerous and are organized in a number of settlements places, but also need to use the contemporary events in which are more promoted, organized and actualized in the country. Event planners need to create synergies among different events and integrate associated economic, tourism, leisure, sport, or socio-cultural objectives by formulating and implementing joint strategies (Ziakas 2010). Normally, all events are not all equally important to the development of tourism and each one of them do not have the same attractiveness to attract greater number of tourists, so special attention should be paid to major events and manifestations that are characterized by large and attractive attributes and can represent and independent tourists motives, the importance of major events in stresses by Getz, who says: all types of planned events have tourism potential, but larger events (in the domains of sport, festivals and other cultural celebrations and business) dominate in the literature and in event tourism development (Getz 2008). Therefore, the following table provides a basic overview of some of the major events in the country.

Table 4. Some of the more important events in the Republic of Macedonia

Event	Location	Month	Visitors
Strumica Carnival	Strumica	II-III	over 50.000
Carnival „Prochka“	Prilep	II-III	over 30.000
Carnival „Bamburci“	v. Ratevo	I	over 4.000
Beer Fest	Prilep	VII	over 350.000
Pivolend	Skopje	IX	over 150.000
Vinoskop	Skopje	IX	over 20.000
Vevchani Carnival	v. Vevchani	I	over 10.000
Galichnik Wedding (Galichka svadba)	v. Galichnik	VII	over 5.000
Ohrid Summer Festival	Ohrid	VII - VIII	over 20.000
Skopje Jazz Festival	Skopje	X	over 5.000

Source: Data from Perishic Dushica. 2019. Catalog of cultural events ULC.

The data in the table presenting basic information on some of the most significant events in the country shows clearly that they attract a lot of visitors, in a very short period of time, because time character of the manifestations is short, usually they last one to two days. Another feature except large attendance is spatial dispersion, that many of the manifestations are held in places that are not traditional touristic. Next feature is the period when the manifestations are held, according to which they affect the extension of the tourist season or cushion the seasonal nature of the tourist movement in the rest of the year. Especially, the authors take into consideration the impact that manifestations have, particularly the larger and more massive visited ones (Beer Fest Prilep, Strumica Carnival- Strumica ...) on the establishment and recognition of these cities as manifestation - event or carnival cities, since these events are part of the tourist and cultural program of the same, this way they are branded i.e. the events brand the cities. City events can be seen as a tool of city branding, they are “planned events” or spatial-temporal phenomena, which are unique because of “interactions among the setting, people, and management systems-including design elements and the program (Gelders 2012). Despite the branding of cities and their greater tourist activation, manifestations and events have a major impact on the local community, its influence is evident in the economic, social, cultural, environmental and political terms. Festivals are emerging worldwide as a growing and vibrant sector of the tourism and leisure industries and are seen to have significant economic, socio-cultural and political impacts on a destination or host community (Arcodia and Whitford 2006).

CONCLUSION

According to the processed data and conducted analysis, it can be concluded that the understanding the condition of tourism in the Republic of Macedonia during the analysed period is as follows:

A significant increase of 58.2% on the tourist movement, expressed in the number of arrivals of tourists, even more important it is that the increase in the arrival of foreign tourists is 157.3%.

Also it is found an increase of 17.7% in the realized overnights by the tourists, which generated an increase in overnight stays by foreign tourists accounted for 155.8%.

The average length of stay of tourists in the analysed period decreased by 25.6%.

Realized tourist turnover during the examined period marks an insignificant growth

Seasonality of tourist movement is visibly expressed, so most of the tourists visiting the country during the summer months of the year

Examining the analysis of the data it can be recorded and the spatial character of tourist movement, where it is evident that the tourist movement is so frequent in other resorts.

The processed data suggest that although there is growth or an increase in the number of tourist arrivals, there is no evident tourist development that is also indicated by the other data. The reason for this unfavourable situation the authors detect in the less attractive and traditional tourist offer of the country, which is focused on a massive summer and winter tourism. The authors believe that it is necessary to enrich the tourist offer of the country with new, attractive tourist products, which will lead to spatial dispersion of tourists in other parts of the country and initiating the tourist movement throughout the year, it would lead to a greater number of visitors, increased tourist

spending, which ultimately should result in greater tourism development due to better tourist offer.

One way to achieve the desired improvement of the tourism product in the country, the authors see in the increasing affirmation of events (all events) and their significant involvement in the strategies for tourism development on national and local level, and thus the aforementioned desired effects will be achieved.

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