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QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FEATURES OF SPORTS TOURISM ON THE MOUNTAINS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

Mountain tourism is one of the most popular touristic forms, which is more and more present on the domestic and international touristic markets. Moreover, the mountain slopes appear as excellent preconditions for development of numerous touristic forms that comefrom mountain tourism and represent subcategories of this type of tourism. Most often, these activities are connected to sport and sport recreation.

In this direction, the paper will provide an analysis of the starting forms of sport tourism on the mountains, their characteristics and potential in direction of increase of the touristic growth and continuation of the touristic season in Republic of Macedonia.

The goal of the paper is to establish the state with the forms of sport tourism on the mountains, on the basis of the gathered results and knowledge, to see the problems and on basis of the research to point and give specific measures and draft proposal activities to reach the desired touristic growth and development.

Key words: mountain tourism, sport and sports activities, touristic growth, increasing the touristic season

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern and dynamic lifestyle in urban areas with a lowered quality of essential elements of the living environment, undoubtedly creates a developing trend of touristic forms which are active outside of the city areas in unpolluted natural environment.

Moreover, mountains are one of the most significant natural geomorphological forms, outside from urban area which often have the capacity to independently attract visitors thanks to the natural factors which they have at disposal and often complemented by anthropogenic factors.

Mountains today represent important assets for the global tourism industry. With their clean air, unique landscapes and wildlife, scenic beauty, rich cultural heritage, and recreational opportunities that they offer, today, mountains are attractive as places of escape from our stressful, urban world and they are magnet for many tourists. On the other hand, many mountain regions in the world have seen a strong rise in living standards after tourism was

introduced. (Marić, 2002) Most often, the contents offered on the mountains allow a relaxing rest and they became a biological necessity, a compensation for the lack of movement and fast lifestyle of the contemporary tourist. Those activities are a constituent segment of the sport and sport recreation. Sport represents an activity that encompasses all forms of sport activities of athletes of all ages, as well as the sport-recreational activities of the citizens (Low of sport, 2013).

C. Graton and P. Tejlor define sport tourism as a "travel caused by non-commercial reasons because of taking part of or being a spectator of sport happenings outside of the living area. While sport recreational tourism foresees the tourist engagement in these activities, namely "as a motive of contemporary tourism, sport recreation appears more and more when the tourists take an active part when on vacation and as a rule does not involve competitive or spectating character, but it is a tourist activity selected by personal preference with the purpose of satisfying the need of movement, play, active vacation and recreation (Relac i Bartoluci, 1987).

In order to create experience worth remembering and inspiring enough to make people return to the place, it is good to move all five human senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch). It is important to include all five senses because the more sensational the experience is, the more it is worth remembering. Many touristic and hospitality services use the string of all sensational elements, sounds, looks, smell, touch and taste (Williams, 2006).

This increasing demand for mountain tourism – which is expected to grow even further, is a great opportunity for the Republic of Macedonia. As a predominantly mountainous country Macedonia should take advantage of these trends on the current global tourism market and diversify its tourism offer with the development of specialized tourism and a variety of offers and activities. Macedonia's mountains are exceptionally diverse in relief and offer abundant options for relaxation, along with sports and entertainment for tourists, since conditions are exceptionally conducive for tourism in both winter and summer (Panov et all. 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This paper is anexploratory research, based on secondary and primary sources, that aims to provide theoretically based case studies analysis of the essential characteristics and key resources of the mountain regions in the Republic of Macedonia.

The methodology that was applied is widely used in tourism studies, such as research methods of analysis and synthesis which allow us a scientific approach in identifying factors that can encourage or limit the tourism development in the mountains and continuation of the touristic season in the mountains. The method of field research was also used as well as the method of surveying with a goal to get as real conclusions as possible for the subject of the study.

RESULTS

PRESENT STATE AND ANALYSIS OF THE SPORT TOURISM ON THE MOUNTAINS IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Macedonia is predominantly a mountainous country. As a result of powerful local and regional geotectonic movements in the past, the landscape in the Republic of Macedonia has

characteristic chess-like relief with frequent changes of mountains and depressions (Milevski, 2011).

Table 1: Tourist arrivals & Tourist nights spent in the Republic of Macedonia (2011-2015)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	Tourist arrivals				
TOTAL	647568	663633	701794	735650	816067
Skopje	141386	152412	168623	181835	220212
Spa resorts	27441	27430	28405	29532	29169
Mountain resorts	71309	68809	68745	64707	62335
Other tourist res.	279695	280375	300540	318972	355890
Other resorts	127737	134607	135481	140604	148461
DOMESTIC	320097	312274	302114	310336	330537
Skopje	15979	18195	19596	20280	22782
Spa resorts	23401	23826	24380	25534	25533
Mountain resorts	58100	55076	52615	47975	44502
Other tourist res.	175612	167047	161087	169217	188004
Other resorts	47005	48130	44436	47330	49716
FOREIGN	327471	351359	399680	425314	485530
Skopje	125407	134217	149027	161555	197430
Spa resorts	4040	3604	4025	3998	3636
Mountain resorts	13209	13733	16130	16732	17833
Other tourist res.	104083	113328	139453	149755	167886
Other resorts	80732	86477	91045	93274	98745
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
TOTAL	Tourist nights spent				
Skopje	2173034	2151692	2157175	2195883	2394205
Spa resorts	254553	269813	288682	310802	378253
Mountain resorts	220640	216516	222362	224374	215541
Other tourist res.	161382	144293	144125	135518	136436
Other resorts	1309184	1287377	1259590	1268676	1407244
DOMESTIC	227275	233693	242416	256513	256731
Skopje	1417868	1339946	1275800	1273370	1357822
Spa resorts	24434	29221	29074	31659	37972
Mountain resorts	193274	190749	195665	199159	192750
Other tourist res.	129937	110865	105301	95877	97831
Other resorts	994400	936386	877076	872259	952985
FOREIGN	75823	72725	68684	74416	76284
Skopje	755166	811746	881375	922513	1036383
Spa resorts	230119	240592	259608	279143	340281
Mountain resorts	27366	25767	26697	25215	22791
Other tourist res.	31445	33428	38824	39641	38605
Other resorts	314784	350991	382514	396417	454259

Source: State statistical office, 2011-2015

Hilly-mountain areas cover approximately 80% of the total area of Macedonia, out of which mountains account for 47,7% of the country. From about 40 mountains, 14 are grouped as

high, extending above 2.000 m a.s.l., with a subgroup of 5 very high ranges (2.500 –2.753 m); 14 are medium-high mountain ranges (1.000 – 2.000 m); and the others are low mountain ranges (below 1.000 m). However, they are unequally outspreaded and most of them are located in the west and central part of the country. The average altitude of the terrain is 850 meters (Panov et all. 2013).

Today, besides the abundance of mountains in Macedonia, still the official data of the state statistics office show that these touristic locations are on the bottom of the table in this country, by both, the number of visits and the number of overnight stays. According to SSO mountainous locations by rule, are locations found on over 500 meters above sea level, or lie in the territorial part of the mountain.

When analyzing the number of tourists visiting a certain place, it is evident that mountain locations are on the list of least visited locations in the country with a 7,6% of tourists. Only spa centres are less visited.

The total percentage of international tourists who visited the mountain locations in Macedonia in 2015 is only 2,2 %. For the analyzed period there is a decline of 12,6% in 2015 compared to 2011. Macedonian tourists decreased by 23,4% while the number of foreign tourists increased by 35%.

The total number of overnight stays by Macedonian tourists in the mountain locations is 136.436, which is 5,7% of the total number of overnight stays in 2015 (SSO, 2016).

The total number of domestic tourists is 97.831 which is 4,1% and 38.605 overnight stays realized by international tourists which is 1,6% of the overall number of realized overnight stays.

There is a trend of decrease of the domestic overnight stays again, and there is an increase of the foreign tourists for the analyzed period of five years.

The indicated data show the unutilized potential of the touristic capacities on the mountain locations in the country. In this direction, a serious thought should be given for the utilization of the types of tourism that include sport and sport activities for the overall growth of tourism on the mountains. There are a number of touristic centers that build their image and perspective exclusively on the basis of sport offers, and the strongest among those are the skiing centers in Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France and many others. Development of sport and sport recreation in tourism can be characterized as sports tourism that can develop and be followed through three forms (Bartoluci, 2003):

1. Competitive sport tourism
2. Winter sport-recreational tourism
3. Summer sport-recreational tourism

Depending on the season the outdoors recreation can be divided in three groups (Müller, 2004):

- Activities independent of the season
- Summer activities
- Winter activities

Analogically to these classifications, the mountain centers in Macedonia were analyzed and the results are provided in the following table.

Table 2: Leading mountains in every statistical region and potentials for development of sports tourism

Region	Mountain	Criteria				
		Activities that are not depend of season	Summer activities	Winter activities	Accommodation capacity	Road infra-structure
Skopje	Skopska Crna Gora	√	√	-	-	√
	Vodno	√	√	-	-	√
Pelagonia	Baba	√	√	√	√	√
	Busheva	√	√	√	√	√
North-east	Osogovian Mountain	√	√	√	√	√
South-east	Kozhuf	√	√	√	-	-
	Belasica	√	√	-	-	√
South-west	Galichica	√	√	-	√	√
	Jablanica	√	√	-	-	-
Polog	Shar Mountain	√	√	√	√	√
	Bistra	√	√	√	√	√
	Korab	√	√	-	-	-
East	Maleshevian	√	√	-	√	√
	Plachkovica	√	√	-	-	√
Vardar	Jakupica	√	√	-	-	-

Source: Author's researches

The analysis and the results given in the table point to existence of realistic preconditions for tourism development (depending on the season) on the mountains in the eight statistical regions in the country. The greater representation of mountains in western Macedonia is quite noticeable.

Besides the numerous natural factors that can be utilized in positive direction for tourism development, a large number of problems also appear. The field research indicated the existence of the following problems connected to tourism on the mountains:

- Lack of regulation of sports tourism as a special form of tourism in the Law on Tourism
- Low level of available infrastructure and accommodation capacities
- Outdated existing infrastructure
- Exceptional seasonality
- Unresolved ownership of structures
- Limited touristic offer near the sport venues
- Weak professionalization of human resources
- Non-existence of sport animators
- Weak inclusion of the sport products in the touristic offer
- Weak representation of touristic arrangements from the area of sport tourism
- Poor methodology in registration of sport tourists
- Weak vertical and horizontal coordination
- Non-existence of cluster organization by the example of worldwide experiences.

The survey was conducted among visitors present at the time on the area of sport-recreational centers Bistra (part of National park Mavrovo), Pelister (part of National park Pelister) and Osogovian Mountains. Total number of participants was 242 visitors, out of which 13 did not fill in the survey. The analyzed data pointed to relatively high level of pleasure in relation to the offer of the listed mountain touristic centers. The most numerous are the participants that answered undefined to the question whether they are satisfied or unsatisfied by the destination.

Table 3: Results of survey about satisfaction level of the tourists at the mountain regions (Bistra, Pelister, Osogovian Mountain)

Satisfaction level	Frequency level	Percentage	Valid percentage
(5) Very pleasant	44	18,2	19
(4) Pleasant	81	33,4	35,4
(3) Neither pleasant or unpleasant	83	34,3	36,2
(2) Unpleasant	15	6,2	6,5
(1) Very unpleasant	6	2,5	2,6
Without answer	13	5,4	-
Total	242	100	100

The results from the research showed an average grade of 3,6 which of course leaves space for additional investments, innovations, and complementation of the overall touristic offer. The surveys showed the pleasure of the visitors in relation to the natural preconditions on the field, and as shortcomings pointed the weak infrastructure (road, hospitality and receptive venues), poor basic and additional tourist offer and the lack of venues that will offer rent of sport requisites.

OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF SPORT TOURISM ON THE MOUNTAINS

The connection of sport, tourism and mountains, contributed towards the development of specific types of tourism which also determine the sport content. The basic problem of contemporary tourism is the development of qualities which unite the important factors in the shaping of the contemporary touristic offer. The factors of direct impact over the quality of the touristic offer, and at the same time important factors for tourism development, also serve in overcoming the seasonal work in tourism. The qualities which enrich and improve the touristic offer are important for the quality, and complementary contents enable development of specific touristic offers and preservation of the ecological state during the tourists' stay. The large possibilities of tourism development are offered by sport, recreation and mountain activities as factors. Of course, some alternative and untypical forms of tourism should be taken into consideration in order to enrich the touristic offer. (Sub strategy for development of sport tourism 2014) Natural resources represent a significant potential for development of sport tourism. In this context, in accordance to research, Republic of Macedonia possesses five natural rocks for sport climbing, 17 roads for mountain cycling, 9 paragliding starting points, 27 fishing locations, 19 hunting locations, 7 locations for winter sports (skiing, snowboarding, Nordic disciplines and the more popular extreme winter sports, which should be given more attention as a developing potential

of sports tourism in future). Alpinism and hiking represent attractive sports, and this is confirmed by the existence of 37 mountaineering homes and 7 attractive locations for alpinism.

The developing branches of mountain tourism should be based on the research foundation, scientific data and established criteria. Those criteria could be:

- Attractive factors
- Qualified personnel
- Price of services
- Promotional activities
- Institutional support.

PERSPECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TOURISM ON THE MOUNTAINS IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Sport and sport-recreational activities in contemporary tourism not only have a role of perception, but are also an important content in which tourists become active judges of different sports. The benefits of technological processes and development of civilization are paid by humans as negative consequences. Namely, the urban living contributes towards a creation of a trend of life in which the physical activity is minimized, at the expense of the psychological and mental effort. This is reflected to creation of stress but also so called modern diseases, most frequently cardiovascular and neurological disorders. Problems with normal functioning of human organs also appear, which medicine does not qualify as pathological conditions.

Biggest part of the (sport) activities on the mountains have capacity to influence movement towards a decrease of those undesired health problems. Therefore, a program of recreation of good quality becomes a necessary actor in health maintenance. Sport and recreation is more than necessary for the urban person, it is a lifestyle, especially in free time, so it is not a miracle that in tourism, the demand for all forms of sport and recreation has suddenly increased.

The abovementioned points to existence of realistic basis for development of mountain tourism, and through it, a decrease of the seasonal touristic determination in this country. Namely, according to State Statistics Office, there is exceptional seasonality in tourism in Macedonia.

Given the absence of data for touristic visits and overnight stays on the mountains by months, the analyzed results are the data on state level. So, in 2015, July and August are the most visited months and note 119.742 and 168.851 tourists which is 35,4% of the total number of tourists for the whole year. These numbers, together with the ones for May, June, and September, which account as months in the so-called “extended” touristic season, take part with 63,9% of the total number of tourists.

The least visited months are January and February, when the lowest numbers are noted, not only in the total number of tourists, but for both the domestic and foreign tourists. The lowest value is noted in February – 29.743 tourists, or 3,6%. For domestic tourists, July and August are distinguished by exceptional seasonality, and in July and August 158.924 tourists are noted, that account for 48% in the total domestic tourists, and 19,5% of the overall number of tourists (SSO, 2016).

The importance of mountains and mountain tourism can also be seen by the place it occupies in the National strategy for tourism development. Namely, here the mountain tourism in

placed as a second type of tourism with an emphasis on the destinations which have a skiing infrastructure at their disposal (Popova Shapka, Mavrovo, Krushevo, Kopanki and Kozhuf).

According to the Draft Strategy 2016, the mountain resorts are mainly visited by local tourists (Macedonia, neighboring regions) most frequently as one-day visits (no overnight stays).

Perspective products of sport tourism's in Republic of Macedonia are:

- Adrenaline (extreme) sport tourism which accounts for competition in sports with a high degree of excitement and extreme conditions (with a certain level of risk)
- Championships – cyclical competitions which include professional and amateur clubs and athletes in different disciples and enable extension of the activity timeframe because of the cyclical characteristic.
- Conferences and gatherings – represent a passive form of sport-recreational products with expert and scientific improvement of the athletes, the trainers, the delegates, referees and other sport logistic.

To decrease the exceptional seasonality in tourism through utilization of the mountains as touristic destinations, and according to the factors at disposal in Macedonia, the following specific measures should the primarily taken:

- Additional investment in most of the existing centers with renovation of the outdoor space
- Broadening of sport – recreational content
- Supply of necessary equipment for rental service
- Trimming the hunting areas
- Trimming the fishing areas
- Trimming and broadening the walking paths
- Walks and runs and orientation walks and runs
- Maintenance of the existing and building new cycling roads (on hilly terrains, on mud, etc.)
- Trimming the riding paths
- Maintenance of the existing and construction of new trim paths
- Trimming the coasts of rivers, lakes and fishponds and supply of the necessary equipment for rental service (fishing equipment, boats, kayaks, skiing on water, canoes etc.)
- Maintenance of the natural swimming areas
- Trimming of the archery polygons;
- Trimming the paths for snowshoeing and running;
- Trimming the outdoor slides and polygons for motocross;
- Preparation of a program of old sports as competing types (village sport games);
- Adrenaline park (rocks for climbing, bungee jumping, walking on boulders, ropes, tree climbing, sport polygons with natural obstacles etc.);

These investments would ensure a quality and diverse sport-recreational offer on outdoor open terrain which would for sure attract a large number of guests and initiate their longer stay.

CONCLUSION

No doubt tourism and sport activities have until today developed as two most significant social phenomena. As they are today, they were also tightly connected and interrelated in the past too.

Research in the world speaks of tourists expectations which see recreation, fun and quality vacation as most important motives for a touristic visit. It could be said that behind all this,

there is the return of the tourists' psycho-physical balance which will return home from their vacation as refreshed, satisfied and richer with a new experience.

Utilizing the potentials of the sport recreational centers, with the help of experts and all available data, could fulfill the touristic offer and extend the touristic season. Introduction of offers of new sport-recreational content often depends on the popularity of a certain locations and influences the overall development of the destination.

The mountains in Macedonia require a necessary change and complementation of the touristic offer in line with new trends and refreshment through authentic, traditional, cultural and ambient elements connected with the sport, typical for the country. Moreover, new untypical selective touristic areas should be introduced on the mountain centers which will contribute towards enrichment of the overall touristic product through numerous inter-sectorial correlations of the social activities.

These principles also determine the building of the touristic offer and the forms that will be incorporated in it. The relation between the mountain and the other types of tourism forms that include sport and sporting activities are optimal touristic forms for which there is a possibility for integrative functioning on the given area.

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КВАЛИТАТИВНИ И КВАНТИТАТИВНИ ОБЕЛЕЖЈА НА СПОРТСКИОТ ТУРИЗАМ НА ПЛАНИНИТЕ ВО РЕПУБЛИКА МАКЕДОНИЈА

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АПСТРАКТ

Туризмот кој се одвива на планина е една од најактуелните туристички форми, кои се повеќе се актуелни на домашните и меѓународните туристички берзи. Притоа, на падините на планините се јавуваат одлични предуслови за развој на бројни туристички форми кои всушност произлегуваат од планинскиот туризам и претставуваат подвидови на овој тип на туризам. Најчесто тие активности се поврзани со спортот и спортската рекреација.

Во таа насока во трудот ќе биде дадена анализа на појдовните форми на активен туризам на планините и нивните карактеристики и потенцијал во насока на зголемување на туристичкиот раст и продолжување на туристичката сезона во Република Македонија.

Целта на трудот е врз основа на добиените резултати и сознанија да се утврди состојбата со облиците на спортски туризам на планините, да се утврдат проблемите и врз основа на истражувањата да се посочат и дадат конкретни мерки и предлог активности за постигнување на посакуваниот туристички раст и развој.

Клучни зборови: планински туризам, спорт и спортски активности, туристички раст, продолжување на туристичката сезона