

# **First International Conference Mediterranean Tourism - MT-2013, 14.06-15.06.2013, Nis, Serbia**

## **Macedonian tourist destinations with a built identity and image**

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**Abstract:** In the last few years Republic of Macedonia is significantly investing in the tourism development. Main arguments for this are diverse natural and cultural heritage which testify for the increased visits of foreign and domestic tourists. Today, on the international tourist market Republic of Macedonia is becoming attractive tourist destination, with a built international tourist identity and image and in the area of lake, mountain, spa, rural, event, religious, and gastronomy tourism. Our assertion is the result of a research according to following criteria: uniqueness, attendance, attractiveness, availability, convenience, services and sustainability.

On the article that we present are separated a few tourist destinations with local, regional, national, and international significance, backed by statistics, tabular, and graphics and other appendices.

**Key words:** Republic of Macedonia, tourism, identity, image, sustainability

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last ten years on the tourism in Republic of Macedonia has been placed special interest. The best proof of the above stated is commitment of the state government that works to promote tourism. The agency for tourism development had been established, which continuously

updates laws for tourism and hospitality, amendments to various rules had been made, tourism development strategies, strategy for rural tourism, providing incentives for tourism subsidies, categorization of hotel facilities, inventory of tourism and catering objects, tourism promotion through films, travel fairs participation and so on.

In the paper will be mentioned many tourist destinations with local, regional, national and international identity. Out from the many we will point out ten tourist destinations that practice tourism appropriate to their specificities and have built national and partially international tourist image.

## **TOURIST PRODUCT**

Tourist product is inseparable part of the tourist destination. Actually tourist product is a synthesis of the different kind attractiveness from natural and human origin in the geography space, as well as guaranteed quality and specificity. Tourist destination develops in the correct direction and it needs valorization of the existing natural resources and cultural-historical heritage. The development of tourist destination means practicing heterogeneous activities and optimally qualitative-quantitative number of: travel companies, agencies, organizations, accommodation, catering, transport and other services, as well as guaranteed quality, specificity and geographical coverage. The life cycle of the tourist product and of the destination is consisted of the following stages: exploration, involvement, development, maturity and stage of stagnation (that can may continue to fail or decline). Actually, every tourist destination through its existence has to go through all these stages. In R. Macedonia, large number of the tourist destinations are in one, two or more stages or phases, i.e. they stageily move through life cycle as tourist product named as tourist destination.

## **TOURIST IDENTITY**

- ✓ Identity (lat. Identitas) - matching, leveling, full equality, recognition that something or someone is really what is displayed, features that characterize some person or object.
- ✓ A set of features, characteristics true image of tourist destination.

- ✓ It happened in the past and today.
- ✓ Identity includes history, contemporary development, domestic population and visitors, tangible and intangible components.
- ✓ Every tourist destination must create and develops its own and recognizable identity.
- ✓ Tourist identity includes all features, specificities in relation to others which whom can be compared.

**Table 1. Part of the national tourist destinations with tourist constructed identity**

Destination	Specificity	
<b>OHRID</b> Ohrid lake Galichica	Cultural,historical and natural values	cultural and sport events, lake, beaches, museums, churches, monasteries, mountains, caves, ...
<b>SKOPJE</b> Skupi Vodno Matka	Cultural, historical and natural values	cultural events, museums, monuments, churches, mosques, monasteries, mountain, cave, lake, ...
<b>BITOLA</b> Heraclea Pelister	Cultural, historical and natural values	cultural events, museums, monuments, churches, mosques, monasteries, mountain
<b>STRUGA</b> Ohrid lake Jablanica	Natural and cultural values	cultural and sporting events, lake, beaches, museums, churches, monasteries, mountains, caves, ...
<b>BEROVO</b> Berovo Maleshevski mountains	Natural and cultural values	cultural events, museums, monuments, churches, mosques, monasteries, mountain, cave, lake, vilages
<b>GEVGELIA</b> Kozuv Negorski spas	Natural and cultural values	cultural events, spas, churches, monasteries, casinos, mountain, ...
<b>DOJHRAN</b> Dojran lake	Natural and cultural values	lake, beaches, cultural events, ...
<b>KRUSEVO</b> Busheva mountains	Natural and cultural values	cultural and sporting events, monuments, churches, monasteries, mountains, villages, ...
<b>MAVROVO</b> Mavrovsko lake Bistra	Natural and cultural values	mountain, cave, cultural and sporting events, churches, monasteries, and weekend tourist village, villages, ...
<b>TETOVO</b> Shar Planina Popova Shapka	Natural and cultural values	cultural and sport events, churches, mosques, monasteries, mountain, tourist and weekend settlement ...
<b>RESEN</b> Prespa Lake Galichica Baba Mountain	Natural and cultural values	Lake, beach, mountains, churches, monasteries, villages, ...

This is only for tourist destinations that bring distinctive national tourist identity. Example: Skopje, as a metropolis of R. Macedonia with cultural - historical continuity from more millenniums. City surrounded by natural and cultural values (Vodno, Matka, Nerezi, Skupi and others) which are travel valued and are visited by thousands domestic but foreign tourists too. Ohrid, town and region that possess confirmed tourist identity, and a space for international tourist identity as: "orthodox Jerusalem", city of UNESCO, Ohrid pearl, Ohrid trout and etc. and others (see Table 1 and 2).

**Table 2. Tourist destinations in the presence of foreign tourists**

<b>Destinations tend to "international identity"</b>	
<b>Percentage ratio of presence of foreign tourists</b>	<b>Places / sites</b>
<b>Over 50%</b>	Ohrid, Skopje
<b>20-50%</b>	Bitola, Gevgelija, Struga, Krusevo, Doiran Berovo, Mavrovo, Popova Sapka, Kozuf, Prilep, Stip, Strumica, Stobi, Heraklea
<b>Below 20%</b>	Vevchani, Galichnik, Pelister, Kokino, Kuklica, Smolare and Koleshino waterfall, Brajcino, Negorski baths, Debar Spa, Bansko, Katlanovska Bath,

Republic of Macedonia, abounds with a large number of natural and anthropogenic motivational values grouped in more regions, areas, zones, centres, places, localities. This touristic grouping is entered in to the national strategy for tourist development, and especially for development of rural and other types of tourism, and other sorts available in this space. The review which follows (Table 3), mentioned are some of the tourist destinations in accordance with the type of tourism that is practiced, and dominated by the national identity. In the review are being recognized certain types of tourist destinations with international tourist identity, such as: Ohrid, Skopje, Struga, and destinations which gradually are being developed from national to international identity (Gevgelija, Berovo, Mavrovo, Krushevo and others).

**Table 3. Tourist destinations by type of tourism**

Types of tourism	Destinations
Lake	Ohrid, Struga, Doiran, Pretor, Cranes, Oteshevo, Stene ...
Spa	Bansko, Negorski, Katlanovo, Banjishte, Kosovrasti, Kezhovica ...
Mountain	Mavrovo, Popova Shapka, Krushevo, Kozuv, Pelister, Ponikava...
Urban	Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola, Stip, Strumica, Prilep, Kratovo, Krusevo
Rural	Vevchani, Galichnik, Brajcino ...
Hunting	Jasen, Jelak ...
Fishing	Radhika, Tikvesh Lake ...
Speleological	Vrelo, Sharkova Dupka ...
Hidrographic	Waterfalls - Smolare, Koleshino, Duf ...
Geomorphological	Kuklica...
Natural-antropological	Kokino, Cocev Stone, Mark Towers ...
Monastery	St. John the Baptist, St. Naum Ohridski, St. Osogovski Joachim, St. Lesnovski, St. Mother-Treskavec ...
Events	Galicka wedding, Strumica Carnival, Carnival Vavchani, Prilep carnaval...
Archeological	Stobi, Heraklea, Bargala, Ohrid, Isar, Marvinci ...
Museum	Skopje, Bitola, Ohrid, Struga, Stip ...
Casino	Gevgelia, Doiran, Skopje, Bitola ...
Wine	Popova Kula, Skovin ...
Dental	Gevgelia, Bitola, Skopje ...

Tourism promotion is an integral part of the tourism identity that must constantly be updated, managed towards building adequate tourist image. Recognizable form of tourism promotion in the country in various events held throughout the year. Within the space, we present only a few events, which we think promote tourism at local, regional, national and international level. The level of popularity defined by our personal visits to these events, contact the organizers and contacts with visitors and tourists from different areas. Formulation that is designed to posit a "+" for positive presence of visitors and tourists, and "±" for the presence of visitors and tourists but thinner than those of local, regional and national environment. (See Table 4).

**Table 4 below. Part of tourist events by level of Popularity**

Event	Level of popularity			
	Local	Regional	National	International
Galichica Wedding	+	+	+	±
Vevchani Carnival	+	+	+	±
Strumica Carnival	+	+	+	±
Prilep kaneval	+	+	+	±
Ohrid Summer	+	+	+	±
Skopje Summer	+	+	+	±
Bitola summer	+	+	+	±
Struga Poetry Evenings	+	+	+	±
Beer Fest Prilep	+	+	+	±
Smokvijada	+	+	+	±

## **TOURIST IMAGE**

- ✓ Image – reflection in the mirror, subjective reflection of reality, special appearance of public figures.
- ✓ Projection of true identity
- ✓ Synonym for her reputation, subjective reflection of reality, subjective representation of objective identity of the tourist destination
- ✓ Initial capital of the international destination
- ✓ Permanent process of properly presenting complex tourism supply
- ✓ The result of the marketing and promotional efforts tourist destination
- ✓ Publicity through the mass media, internet, etc..
- ✓ Strengthening of public opinion tourist destination
- ✓ An essential element of a National overall image, the degree of democracy, human rights, social policy, economic trends ...

In summary, Table 5 sets out some of the tourist destinations with built Macedonian tourist image.

**Table 5. Tourist destinations with Macedonian image**

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Built Macedonian tourist image</b>
<b>OHRID</b>	Pearl Ohrid, Ohrid Trout Lake Clear, "Macedonian Jerusalem", the UNESCO town, city and area with more millennium history ...
<b>SKOPJE</b>	Metropolis, the city of monuments and museums, ...
<b>BITOLA</b>	City with Heraklea Linkestis have millennia history and culture, city of consuls, ...
<b>KRATOVO</b>	Kuklica, Cocev stone, medieval towers, bridges, ...
<b>KRUSHEVO</b>	City with the epithet "the first republic in the Balkans," city ethnic tradition, city museum ...
<b>STARO NAGORICHANE</b>	Megalithic Observatory "Kokino", recognized by NASA, several millennia old, ...

## **CONCLUSION**

Macedonian tourist destinations with an established identity and image are the result of continuous practiced and integrated tourism policy. But modern travel trends and requirements of the tourists are always ahead of official travel policies. Thus, complex travel product ever to be enriched with new content, new development strategies, application of various forms of economic management by the state (the VAT reduction, subsidies, concessions, leases, benefits, regressions, training, etc.).

In terms of building complex tourist product tourist identity and image, as well as its active and continuous management should include local government, NGOs, tourist centers, agencies, associations and so on. All states must end and the practice of foreign experience in tourism through foreign investment, concession, partnership, implementations of international projects and other forms of cooperation with the aim of promoting the development of Macedonian tourism. However, all of this mentioned above it can be concluded that the tourist destinations in the country have great potentials of favorable natural conditions and natural beauty, rich cultural and historical heritage, diversive gastronomic meal and more diversity of tourist offer. It contributes Macedonia to be desired tourist destination of domestic and foreign tourists. A variety of Macedonian tourist destinations through tourism promotion and

marketing are trying to build a recognizable identity and image to be seen in international tourist flows. Perhaps one of the most problems for systematic implementation of all imaginable tourism is the lack of the Ministry of Tourism. We appreciate, if there are established opportunities to implement ideas, creating projects and others will get in intensity, quantity and quality with the primary goal of promoting tourism.

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**Picture 1. Map - Part of the contents of tourism offer, on Macedonian tourist destinations**