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TOURISM IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract

Due to the fact that tourism has strong influences on regional development, many undeveloped and developing countries have detected it as a chance for economic prosperity. This paper argues the inevitable relationship between tourism development and regional development. The objective of the paper is to present the influence of tourism on regional development in south-west part of Macedonia. Moreover, it addresses the issues of tourism flows, accommodation capacities as well as the tourism consumption within the south-west region. In this respect, the analyses are based generally on official sources of secondary data spreading over the sample period from 2003 to 2010. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics applied in different types of analyses, point out that the South-West planning region is the leading statistical region in Macedonia when referring tourism and regional development issues. Yet, despite its enormous potentials, tourism in the south-west part of Macedonia, still has not reached its peak point. On one hand, this empirical evidence underscores a good example of tourism application in regional development, but on the other hand, points out the necessity of undertaking governmental measures and initiatives for enhancing tourism contribution to the regional development.

Key words: Regional development; Tourism; South-West planning region; Macedonia.

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Introduction

Tourism and regional development are closely linked. In many regions, the tourism industry is one of the greatest sources of economic growth and job creation. Moreover, tourism can contribute to integrating less developed regions or giving them equal access to the fruits of growth. In this respect, one of the major challenges consists of setting up mechanisms to improve competitiveness and quality of tourism at regional and local levels, as well as to ensure sustainable and balanced tourism development at national levels.

At the same time, tourism has emerged as a major factor for regional economic development. Regardless the nature, tourism has a major economic and social impact at regional and local levels in the areas where tourism activities take place. So, some regions were highly positively influenced by tourism impacts, like mainly coastal (Emilia-Romagna in Italy), mountainous (Valais in Switzerland), urban and historic (Ile-de-France in France) or regions with exceptional natural resources (Quebec in Canada, Arizona in the United States). Additionally, regions with different profiles can also benefit from the growth of tourism. In this line, they can be rural, promoting green tourism, leisure and nature activities (Queensland in Australia), very remote, (Greenland in Denmark) or regions undergoing industrial restructuring (Nord-Pas-de-Calais in France).

The regional development of tourism can trigger general economic growth by creating a new dynamic. It can also contribute to better land use planning by countering rapid urbanisation in developed countries and by attracting populations to new regions where tourism is developing. However, some guidelines for development must be laid down in order to preserve resources, ensure complementarity between areas and define tourism poles (which may not coincide with administrative boundaries). Yet, tourism development in the underdeveloped areas enables development of the periphery, retaining the population in the homeland, infrastructure is improved as well as all other activities which contribute to prosperity of the region and a country. The objective of this paper is to disentangle tourism influence on regional development of Macedonia in terms of tourist resources, tourist arrivals, nights spent and similar basic economic parameters. In order of achieving that goal, the paper addresses the case of the South-West planning region of Macedonia as the best practice and the leading statistical region when referring tourism development.

Literature Review

The concept of regional development includes on one hand, the dynamics of development of specific areas, primarily understood as a regional economic development of those areas, but also regional traffic, population or environmental development. There is a large body of literature which main thesis are that regional development must be based on the exploitation of best potentials of the regions environmental features, and sustainable development must be based on reasonable regional development.

In this respect, the conventional thinking about the relationship between tourism and regional development is present in the most studies (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002; Rayan, 2010; Stabler et al., 2010). Other researchers investigate the local, place-based factors that influence tourism development, and ask why some tourism areas develop more than others (Raina and Agarwal, 2004). Likewise, a focus is put specifically on the less developed world and by arising many assumptions about the role of tourism in development and, in particular, highlighting the dilemmas faced by destinations seeking to achieve development through tourism (Huybers, 2007; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Some authors even endeavour to a critical approach within a multi-disciplinary framework to relook at the complex phenomenon of tourism development (Babu et al., 2008; Ramos and Jimenez, 2008). In the last twenty years, large regional differences in the quality of life have emerged within many transition economies (Bartlett et al., 2010).

Tourism is seen as a 'sunrise' industry that is labour intensive and therefore offers the potential to be a substantial source of employment. In short, much attention has been directed to tourism's economic potential (Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Jenkins et al., 1998; Butler et al., 1998). Due to the relationship between food and tourism, some authors underscore the significant opportunity for product development as a means to rural diversification (Bessière, 1998). Others examine the contemporary issues and reasons for tourism development as a strategy for urban revitalization (Pearce and Butler, 2002) as well as for providing the basis for a better informed integration of tourism in regional development strategies (Sharma, 2004). Moreover, some discussions are towards various policy innovations as activities by regions in terms of tourism development considering continuous growth within the sector (Giaoutzi and Nijkamp, 2006). Additionally, as tourism and regional development are closely linked, regions and local authorities play a key role in the formulation of policy and the organization and development of tourism (Constantin, 2000).

Background Material

Like many countries, Macedonia has been affected by growing regional inequalities during transition. Pre-existing regional inequalities have intensified during the transition process and have been exacerbated by non-economic factors. Per capita income in the capital city of Skopje is far above the rest of the country and became the main pole of development. While the other regions have secondary towns that are poles for their development, none can compete with the capital. Consequently, this kind of monocentric pattern of development underpinned huge differences in the quality of life among the regions of the country.

Although regional policies have been put in place over the years and a process of decentralisation has been applied since the end of the 2001 conflict, they have as yet not addressed these fundamental inequalities. In recent years eight planning regions have been defined, each with own specific characteristics and development problems. In that line, the Law on Equal Regional Development set in 2007 laid the foundation for a regional policy that conforms to EU standards and foresees resolving the problem of delayed development of some regions in an institutional manner. A Council for Equal Development has been established with a mandate to coordinate regional development policy, and a Council for the Development of the Planning Regions has been established as a body responsible for the implementation of the policy in each planning region. The former Agency for Economically Underdeveloped Areas has been transformed into the Regional Development Bureau. Additionally, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and National Strategy for Regional Development (Government of the Republic of Macedonia 2009a and 2009b) offered possibilities for revitalization of numerous deserted areas in Macedonia. Furthermore, recently revised National Strategy of Tourism Development (Government of the Republic of Macedonia, 2009c) gives recommendations for tourism development and identifies five strategic clusters as a framework to Macedonian tourism development.

As a consequence to the global economic crisis, the economic growth began to slow down sharply in early 2009. In this context, the opening of EU accession negotiations increased the financial assistance for pre-accession reform being focused on cross-border co-operation and regional development. This was seen as an important part of government policy and a strategically important issue in the EU accession process which aims to reduce regional differences within the country. As from 2010, the National Programme to Promote Regional Development was launched resulting with more than 200 regional

development projects being submitted and still in process of implementation. Nevertheless, so far, regional policy has been mainly concerned with economic conditions and with creation of economic infrastructure, while less attention was paid to the quality of life and its regional differences.

Methodology

The paper makes an attempt to document different views and paradigms on tourism development in an in-depth manner. So, the objective of this research is to give an overview of tourism importance as a source of economic development in the south-west part of Macedonia. In order to fulfill its main aim, the paper is reach on different types of analysis mostly based on available sources of secondary data. Furthermore, it follows some of the main factors presented in the Table 1, as a precondition for identification of tourism regional economic impacts.

Table 1: Tourism regional economic impacts

Factors	Resources	Changes	Parameters and standards
Prices Employment Investment Imports Expenditure Foreign exchange	Fiscal Financial Infrastructure Marketing Trade Incentives	Direct, indirect and induced changes in economic factors Multiplier effects	Unemployment Inflation Average weekly earnings Interest Exchange rates Multiplier, etc.

Source: Atherton (1992: 294)

Yet, despite the enormous potentials, tourism in the South-West planning region in Macedonia, still has not reached its peak point. On one hand, this empirical evidence underscores a good example of tourism application in regional development, but on the other, points out the necessity of undertaking governmental measures and initiatives for enhancing tourism contribution to the regional development.

Analysis, Results and Discussion

Generally, the paper addresses the issues of tourism flows, accommodation capacities, as well as the tourism consumption within the South-West planning region. Previously, a brief introduction regarding the territorial division in statistical and planning regions is presented.

For this purpose, the analyses are based generally on official sources of secondary data spreading over the sample period from 2003 to 2010. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics applied in different types of analyses, point out that the South-West planning region is the leading statistical region in Macedonia when referring tourism and regional development issues.

NUTS Classification

In 2007, under the imperative to harmonize its laws with the EU, Macedonia adopted the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS 3 level) and created eight statistical regions: Vardar, East, South-West, South-East, Pelagonija, Polog, North-East and Skopje (Figure 1). These regions serve as main units for development planning. Moreover, they have been assigned the role of planning regions entitled for planning process and implementation of a consistent regional development policy and for harmonization of regional policy in Macedonia with the EU regional policy.

According to Marcou (2002), the experience of the Central and Eastern European countries show that there is no obligation under the EU law to align NUTS units to the existing administrative organization of the country. However, “for practical reasons regarding data availability, the design of the statistical units follows the borders of the existing administrative units, and it is usually revised following an administrative reform in the respective country” (Marcou, 2002: 182).

Table 2: Population by statistical regions, 2010

Region	Population
Vardar	133 248
East	203 213
South-West	221 651
South-East	171 416
Pelagonija	221 019
Polog	304 125
North-East	173 814
Skopje	571 040

Figure 1: Statistical regions in Macedonia



Source: State Statistical Office (2010) Source: www.wikipedia.org

The Table 2 gives an overview of the size of population by statistical regions in Macedonia. If we exclude Skopje planning region since it accounts the capital city, than the South-West planning region is second in rang. It is consisted of 286 inhabited places or 13 municipalities, out of which five are urban and eight are rural municipalities.

Each of the planning regions has a Centre for development established for the purposes of carrying out professional tasks relevant for the development of that particular region.

Tourism Flows

The planning regions were created for regional development planning and for realizing measures and instruments for promoting balanced regional development. The data point out that the South-West planning region is the leading statistical region in Macedonia when referring tourism development issues.

The Table 3 describes tourist arrivals within the sample period 2003-2010. Also, it is visually noticeable that the South-West planning region is by far absolutely dominant in terms of tourist arrivals in comparison to other planning regions in Macedonia (Figure 2). In 2009, 170 127 domestic tourists visited the South-West planning region, thus representing 52% of total domestic tourism demand. Similar positive conclusion can be underlined when referring to international tourism demand, when the region was visited by 87 353 foreign tourists representing one-third of the total foreign tourists in Macedonia.

Speaking generally, this region participates with 40-50% or nearly one-half of the total tourist arrivals in Macedonia. This fact indicates that the

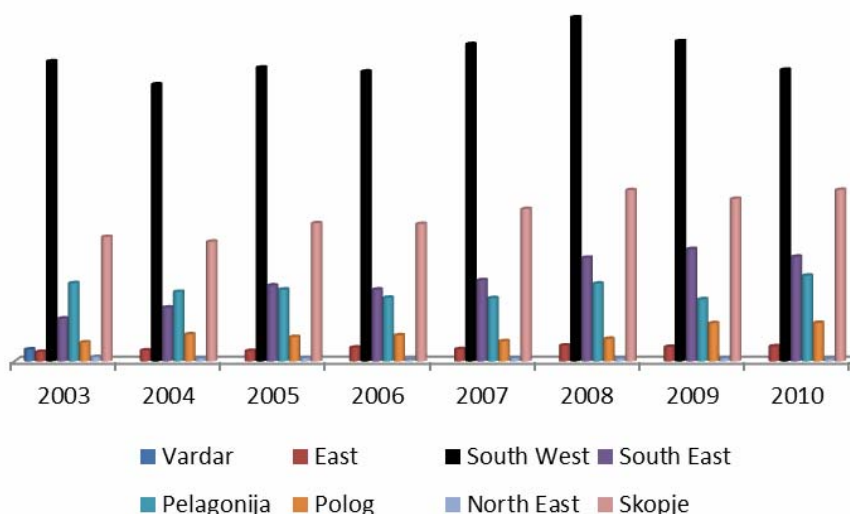
South-West region is the leader in tourism development and may serve as a good example for other planning regions.

Table 3: Tourist arrivals by statistical regions in Macedonia, 2003-2010

Region/year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Vardar	12 698	8 334	7 564	8 173	8 419	7 799	9 448	10 572
East	8 602	9 865	9 377	12 069	10 813	13 739	12 680	13 054
South-West	241 380	222 950	236 434	233 218	255 257	276 669	257 480	234 665
South-East	35 313	44 094	61 851	58 577	66 043	84 031	90 998	84 856
Pelagonija	63 689	56 710	58 553	51 970	51 715	63 325	50 740	69 712
Polog	16 255	22 679	20 555	21 890	17 188	19 153	31 596	31 828
North-East	4 540	3 373	3 672	2 433	3 657	3 395	3 560	3 098
Skopje	100 674	97 010	111 700	111 143	123 120	138 209	131 268	138 456
Total	483 151	465 015	509 706	499 473	536212	605 320	587 770	586 241

Source: Authors' own calculations based on: State Statistical Office (various years).

Figure 2: Tourist arrivals by statistical regions in Macedonia, 2003-2010



Source: Authors' own calculations based on: State Statistical Office (various years).

The South-West planning region has once again the leading role when analyzing tourist nights spent for the period 2003-2010. Namely, the Table 3 performs that two-thirds of the total tourist nights spent are registered within this region i.e. 58-67% of the tourist nights spent are noted within the past eight years. This fact is not a surprise since it is in a direct correlation to the previously analysis outcome in terms of tourist arrivals. It can be concluded that the South-West planning region still

has the biggest piece of the cake, although a downward trend is noted from 2008-2010 as a consequence to the world financial crisis.

The analyzed data perform that even 71% of total domestic nights spent and 43% of total foreign nights spent are registered in the South-West region. The last available official statistical data addressing 2010 indicate that 58% of the total tourist nights spent are recorder in the South-West planning region (Figure 3).

Table 3: Tourist nights spent by statistical regions in Macedonia, 2003-2010

Region/year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Vardar	30 859	17 772	15 803	16 880	15 530	13 861	17 228	20 137
East	22 171	26 406	19 909	28 989	21 694	28 449	27 509	25 687
South-West	1339022	1170481	1288135	1244487	1351806	1452205	1326192	1168824
South-East	169 100	233 738	208 858	218 077	211 619	260 351	277 030	262 787
Pelagonija	202 424	176 930	178 814	155 461	152 726	171 928	139 699	170 354
Polog	39 536	53 450	50 476	53 824	37 986	45 345	61 146	61 455
North-East	6 365	5 684	6 066	4 003	5 677	5 130	6 247	5 628
Skopje	197 390	180 973	201 980	195 674	222 674	258 251	246 555	305 345
Total	2006867	1865434	1970041	1917395	2019712	2235520	2101606	2020217

Source: Authors' own calculations based on: State Statistical Office (various years).

Figure 3: Tourist nights spent, by statistical regions in 2010



Source: Authors' own calculations based on: State Statistical Office (2011: 40).

The sustainability of tourism as a leading accelerator for development in the South-West planning region is supported by another positive finding. Namely, this region is well-established as a leading tourist center in Macedonia since it fulfills the highest average length of stay. So, between 2003 and 2010, the average length of stay is between 5 and

5.5 days. When compared with the average of Macedonia which is 3.4 to 4.2 days, it is 1.5 times higher. Thus, one must respect tourism results of the South-West region and appoints tourism as the strategic priority areas for regional development.

Accommodation Capacity and Tourism Consumption

The analysis of the accommodation capacity is important since it argues the (in)appropriateness of tourism accommodation supply. In this respect, it is noted that the comparative analysis of the estimated values regarding the number of needed hotel beds with the existing ones, points to an over dimension of hotel accommodation capacities in Macedonia (Petrevska, 2011).

Moreover, the main aim is to lead us to concluding remarks weather key actors which are responsible for tourism policy, should carry out measures and activities for enhancing tourism competitiveness in the South-West planning region. The Table 4 gives an overview of the accommodation capacity in all eight statistical planning regions in Macedonia in 2010. It is noticeable that the South-West region accounts for 60% of the total number of beds in Macedonia and 61% of the total number of rooms. However, the limited data regarding the structure of the accommodation capacity prevented us in more in-depth analysis.

Table 4: Accommodation capacity by statistical regions in Macedonia in 2010

Region/year	Number of rooms	Number of beds
Vardar	554	1 496
East	533	1 591
South-West	16 013	41 458
South-East	2 105	5 724
Pelagonija	3 390	10 229
Polog	1 011	3 057
North-East	292	633
Skopje	2 291	4 914
Total	26 189	69 102

Source: Authors' own calculations based on: State Statistical Office (2011: 42).

Tourism Potentials for Regional Development

All eight statistical planning regions in Macedonia have potentials for tourism development based on variety of natural and cultural attractions. Yet, the undertaken analysis indicates on shortage of identified types of tourism as priorities for regions' tourism development. The priorities may serve as a starting point in the process of creation competitive tourism supply which might enable regional development, but with obligatory attention of their sustainability.

The above noted analysis outcomes clearly indicate an inappropriateness of current tourism development. This is mainly due to the lack of correspondence and balance between existing tourism potentials and development effects. The Table 5 presents certain tourism potentials of the South-West planning region which might produce positive results, not only within that particular region, but in broader frames as well.

Table 5: Tourism potentials of the South-West planning region

Place	Type of tourism
Ohrid	Lake tourism; Eco tourism; City tourism; Events; Cultural tourism; Wine tourism; Alternative forms of tourism
St. Naum	Lake tourism; Eco tourism; Cultural tourism; Fishing
Struga	Lake tourism; Eco tourism; City tourism; Events; Cultural tourism; Wine tourism; Alternative forms of tourism
Kicevo	Mountain tourism; River tourism; Fishing; Hunting; Eco tourism; Cultural tourism; Transit tourism
Debar	Thermal tourism; Mountain tourism; River tourism; Fishing; Hunting; Eco tourism; Rural tourism; Lake tourism
Pesna	Speleological tourism
Radozda	Lake tourism; Fishing
Pestani	Lake tourism; Cultural tourism; Fishing; Eco tourism
Trpejca	Lake tourism; Cultural tourism; Fishing; Eco tourism
Vevcani	Rural tourism; Cultural tourism; Events; Mountain tourism; Eco tourism

Source: Authors' notes based on various publications.

Future Challenges

Positive effects of tourism are rising from day to day, not only for a separate region like the South-West, but also for Macedonia. It is noticeable that tourism has strong influences on the regional development so the developing countries as Macedonia are exploring it as a chance for development. Namely, tourism development affects the regional development and is interconnected with variety of other activities, like new jobs creation, traffic development and higher prices of land, from agricultural to building land, and alike.

However, numerous constraints and opportunities for regional prosperity through tourism development arise in the case of the South-West planning region. The key challenge is the lack of critical mass of users and of suppliers. The local consumer base tends to be too small to support a diversity of businesses. Consequently, it is difficult to develop a range of tourism product, and many regional destinations become tourism 'monocultures' with a small number of product types. Furthermore, tourism businesses tend to build greater reliance on tourism markets than those in major urban areas. This increases the pressure on tourism infrastructure, particularly transport and destination marketing. It also increases the need for tourism businesses to collaborate within and across other seven regions, as it will require a number of destinations to build an experience that will justify a visitor making the trip.

Beyond tourism policy, regional development policy generally can contribute to innovation capacity of destinations. In this respect, it is necessary that several point marks are included: (1) departments of regional development to recognise that departments of tourism have traditionally been charged with promotion rather than development and management; (2) many regions are not well connected with the people and organisations who represent important interests at state and national level, and facilitation is required to forge connections; (3) expansion of public sector funding programs to include build capacity to assess feasibility; and (4) to follow recent trends in regional development programs toward specific developments with immediate impact on particular communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper in general shows that the potential role of tourism in economic development of the South-West planning region is significant. However, further development in tourism depends on: (1) public policies directed towards specific investments which is tailored according to the

needs of the region; (2) efforts to increase tourist accommodation capacity and the occupancy rate in the planning region and (3) significant efforts to increase tourism income through subsidies, tax deductions, etc., as a precondition for regions' tourism development.

Furthermore, from the analyzed data can be seen that tourism potentials of the South-West planning region are still insufficiently used. The reason for this lies mostly in the nonexistence of a tradition of tourism development, poor development of the traffic network and the lack of modern hotel accommodation. There are only few geographic areas in Macedonia which are strongly affected by location factors in tourism development. This is the first factor that makes the South-West planning region different from other planning regions in Macedonia. With exception to the past few years due to the global financial crisis, this region notes upward trend in terms of tourist arrivals and nights spent. The foreign tourists mostly come from the neighboring countries and together with the domestic ones visit it for the well preserved and clean environment, the Lake Ohrid and the numerous cultural and historical monuments. Additionally, the research outcome disentangle that tourism industry must have a significant position in the regional programmes and the development strategy being defined as a key opportunity for development.

So, the research allows increased understanding of the way tourism operates in the South-West planning region, and identifies potential challenges Macedonia may face in its attempt to employ tourism as part of a comprehensive regional development strategy. At the same time, it defines some strength that can be brought to tourism planning and management processes in the South-West planning region.

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