

ANALYSIS OF THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPEMENT THE RURAL TOURISM SUPPLY ON MOUNTAIN SKOPSKA CRNA GORA

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Abstract

Macedonia, as a future member of the European Union, is facing an important and difficult task: to promote its tourism supply according to the leading European Countries in order to achieve competitive advantage in tourism market. Alternative forms of tourism are an important part of a tourism supply that could satisfy the specific tourist needs. These include rural tourism for which there is an increased demand every day. Macedonia is a country rich in various resources that are essential for making unique, rich and competent rural tourism supply, created strictly according to the principles of sustainable development. The aim of this paper work is to indicate the importance of the development of rural tourism supply for Macedonia, whereas the objective is to analyze the possibilities of the development of the rural tourism supply in the area of mountain Skopska Crna Gora, in order to develop competitive tourism supply.

Keywords: rural tourism, Mountain Skopska Crna Gora.

Jel Classification: Q5

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that modern trends show great interest in tourism supply of a mass tourism 3S (sun-sea-sand), the interest in alternative forms of tourism is increasing as well (especially eco tourism, rural tourism, etc.) There are often new tourist destinations on the tourism market, which offer unique high quality tourism products, which means that Macedonia has a demanding task: to profit and to develop its own rural tourism tourist product in a way that it separates from the mass and remains in the minds of potential tourists. In order to achieve this, they should constantly promote quality rural tourism supply, according to the best destinations practice (Austria,

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Slovenia, etc.), which, on the other hand, will provide competitive strategic appearance on the tourism market. In the following paper, we will explain the importance of rural tourism for promotion of tourism supply.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL TOURISM FOR PROMOTION OF TOURISM SUPPLY

One of the main trends in modern ecological tourism under Agenda 21 adopted by the WTO and WTTC1, among other things, is the development of eco-tourism as a form of alternative tourism (Demonja and Ruzic 2012, 12). Rural tourism is a collective name for various activities and tourism forms, which emerge outside of the urban and mass tourism areas. The importance of rural tourism is reflected in highly significant interaction of agricultural production of traditional products, presentation of tradition, traditional gastronomy and tourist services, and use of the existing resources.

Basically, rural tourism represents all the activities in a rural area which may satisfy tourists' needs for peacefulness, recreation and active open-air vacation. Rural tourism provides visitors with the possibility to feel the tradition and the way of life of the local community. Rural tourism includes staying on tourist family country farms and the surrounding area, with active participation in the daily activities of the country farm and the local community. Investments in rural areas may result in preservation of historical buildings and traditional customs characteristic for a certain country. Accommodation facilities have to be modernized in accordance with contemporary tourists' needs, provided that original experience is preserved, and rural area should be used for organization of various activities, sports recreation, organization of events, etc. The objective of tourism development in a rural area is to enable visitors to come into contact with nature and to fully experience the atmosphere of a rural tourist destination (Alkier Radnic, Milojica, and Drpic 2012, 254). The development of this type brings various advantages for a tourist destination: revitalization and sustainable development of rural areas, preserving the local identity, tradition and customs which are typical for a tourist destination, and without which the development of rural tourism supply will not be possible.

Staying in fresh air in untouched nature, in small villages, the possibility to consume ecologically clean food, direct contact with the host and local people, are advantages and at the same time differences compared to the mass tourism supply. Accommodated in tourist village farms, tourists can participate in the farm works (taking care of animals, fieldwork, etc.), preparation of traditional gourmet (meat, vegetable, fruit and dairy) products and oenological products (different types of wine, brandy, juice, etc.) which are typical for the tourist destination. Educative part of this kind of tourism is manifested in the opportunity for tourists to take part in different cultural workshops (learning folk dances and folk songs, making national dress, wooden products, etc.). It is inevitable to mention the recreation part (swimming, cycling, walking, hiking, etc.). A successful development of a rural tourist supply is not evident only in terms of finances, but in terms of the fact that tourists are experiencing something new, i.e. the value and experience for money. Macedonia has various resources for development of rural and other types of tourism. Mountain Skopska Crna Gora is one of the areas that have a great capacity for the development of rural tourism, so below are the opportunities for rural tourism development.

OVERVIEW OF POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM ON MOUNTAIN SKOPSKA CRNA GORA

On the southwest of mountain Skopska Crna Gora, there are various natural and cultural-historical resources for development of rural tourism, which is important for the local people, since it is a possibility for improvement of the living standard.

Below is a comparison of the capacity of the two villages Zrnovci, which shows the first results of a famous rural tourism supply and Ljubanci, which has a great opportunity to grow in a successful rural tourism story.

Table 1. Comparison of the potential of the villages Zrnovci and Ljubanci

Villages	Zrnovci	Ljubanci
Municipality:	Zrnovci	Butel
Location	Plackovica in the south, Kocani ravine in the north	Skopska Crna Gora in the north, Skopje ravine in the south
Distance	From Vinica-6 km/ 10.863 population From Kocani -8 km. / 38 092 population	From Skopje - 16 km/ 668,518 population
Climate	Moderate continental, moderate mountain	Moderate continental, mountain,
Hydrography	Hydropower station „Zrnovci, Zrnovska River, 38 km ²	Ljubanska River, 8,5 km ² (electric power plant is being projected)
Buildings	Authentic rural architecture (stone and wood)	Authentic rural architecture (stone and wood) tourist attraction
Altitude above sea level	Plain and rangy, 345 metres above sea level	Rangy mountainous 749 metres above sea level
Buildings	Traditional and modern houses	Traditional and modern houses
Area	2.848 hectares 1,623 hectares forests 911,76 hectares farmland	24,1 km ² / forests 1.166 hectares 546 hectares farmland 627 hectares meadow
Natural resources	Rice fields, scenery, endemic river trout and crayfish, natural rarities	Mountain scenery, chestnut forest, bio diversity
Anthropogenic resources	“Holy Sunday” and “St Demetrius” tradition, tavern, festivals, archaeological site, Primary school “Todor Arsov”, Centre of culture, Cinema, Sokolana football field with stands, summer garden, market, ambulance, post office, park, water fountain	“St. Nicholas”, “St Bogorodica”, “St John” and “St. Nicholas”, tradition, festivals, carnival, resort, archaeological sites, Primary school “Goce Delcev”, Centre of culture, football field with stands, mini football field, summer garden, café, ambulance, park, water fountain, ethno restaurant and fish farm
Population	2.279	928

According to the information in the table above, the two villages are on a different altitude above sea level, and there are different natural and anthropogenic values in rural area. The mountain and preserve nature near Skopje contributes to the attractiveness of the destination. It is important to remark that the association "Zrnovci tourism" offered its services to Macedonian tour operators and travel agencies thus promoting these villages as places with beautiful and untouched nature, favourable natural-geographic conditions, various anthropogenic values and the hospitality of population, which is essential for achieving the tourist goal: a holiday in a clean and peaceful urban environment.

However, in order to achieve the goal of successful development, it is necessary to take some action like improvement of the traffic infrastructure, mountain paths, restaurant offers, horticultural arrangement of the environment regarding the leading

destinations. Adequate promotion of these innovations is important in order to motivate the potential tourists to visit this destination.

The support of the local population is an essential factor in the process of developing a quality and competitive rural tourism supply. Below is a part of survey conducted in the southwest of Skopska Crna Gora.

The survey was conducted on 900 people in 15 villages in Skopje by means of questionnaire (this survey excludes people from urban part of Radishani, and villages with Albanian population). The survey consisted of 14 questions, out of which 4 open questions. The objective of the survey was to evaluate the interest of the local population in the development of tourism in that region. The questions were in Macedonian language. The results of the survey show the interest of the population in development of tourism in that region, and give directions for further research and action.

The age group of the respondents is as follows: 28% of the respondents were at the age of 18-25, 52% at the age of 26-50, and 20% were 51+.

In terms of the employment, the results are as follows: 45%- employed, 38%-unemployed, while 17% respondents did not give any information.

In terms of their education, the results are as follows: 6%- primary education, 85%-secondary education, 7%- higher education, 2% of the respondents did not give any information.

In terms of the place of residence, 78% of the respondents think that they live in a clean environment, 18% think they live in partly clean and healthy environment, where as 4% think that they live in a dirty and polluted environment. The analysis shows that the great majority think that they live in a clean and healthy environment.

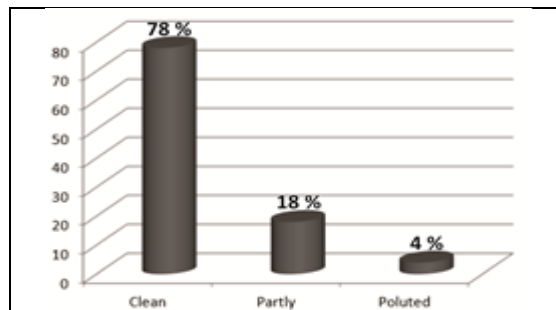


Figure 1. Environmental cleanliness

The answers to the question if they plan to change the place of residence are as follows: 69% gave negative answers, 14% gave positive answer, and 17% of the respondents are not sure. This shows a stable demographic structure, which is very important for improving the tourism market.

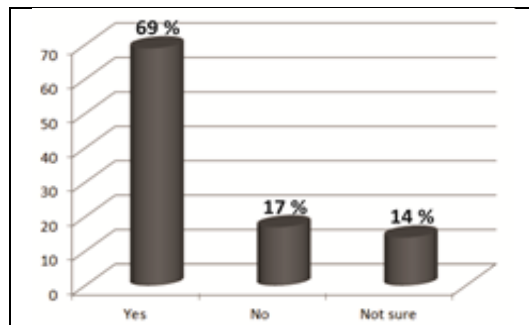


Figure 2. Change of residence

The answers to the question if they have ever participated in tourism movement of the region in any form are as follows: 592 respondents said that they have participated in tourism as tourists, 24 as employees in tourism activities, and 12 as tourism service providers. Overall, 208 respondents have no experience in tourism as economic activity. Villagers have little experience with things and activities related to tourism, but as participants in role of tourists.



Figure 3. Participation in tourism market

The answers to the question if they are familiar with the term alternative forms of tourism are as follows: 58% respondents gave negative answer, and only 42% gave positive answer, which shows worrying fact that people do not receive clear information about the real capacities of Skopska Crna Gora region.

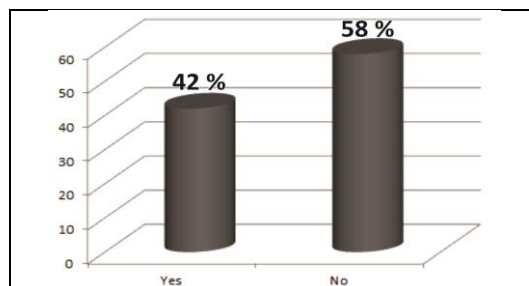


Figure 4. Alternative forms of tourism

Responders answered a question if they should preserve old houses or remove them. 39% respondents were against demolition, 35% were for demolition, 21% answered maybe, and 5% were restrained. This information is worrying, in accordance to the fact that local population is unaware of the importance of traditional local architecture which is an important element of the rural tourism supply.

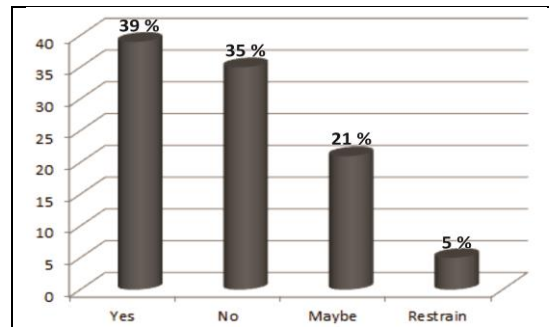


Figure 5. Preservation of old houses

The respondents answered the question if they are ready to invite tourists in their homes. 59% respondents gave positive answer, 16% gave negative answers, whereas 25% answered maybe. The reason for their negative answer, the respondents see in the lack of financial resources, space or the need of activities. This indicates that there is a necessity of increasing the awareness of population about the national strategy of tourism development, and the possibility of using resources from European funds for rural development, thus improving the involvement of population in tourism supplies and improved use of the capacities of Skopska Crna Gora.

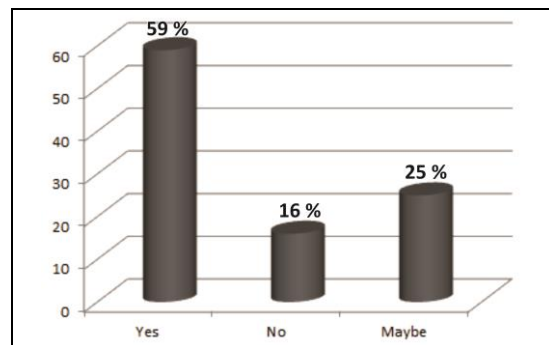


Figure 6. Inviting tourists in your house

The answers to the question where they can find information if the person is interested in tourism dealings are as follows: only 630 respondents (4%) - Ministry of tourism, local authorities (31%), travel agency (24%), who cares (13%), do not know (28%), no answer (0%).

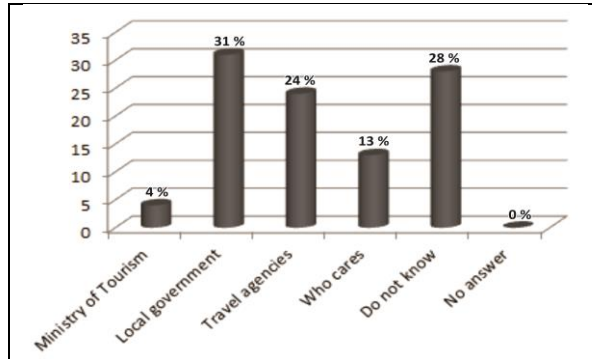


Figure 7. Information about the interest in tourism

The answers to the question if their municipality has a strategy for tourism development, the answers are as follows: 34% respondents gave positive answer, 41% gave negative answers, 22% do not know, whereas 3% gave no answer. This result also indicates that the inhabitants lack information about the real possibilities for tourist supply development.

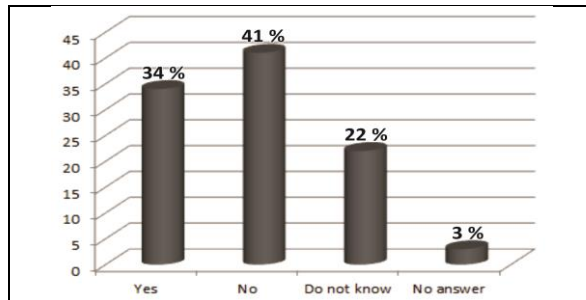


Figure 8. The strategy of the municipality for tourism development

The answers to the question if they are familiar with the term pre-accessible funds IPARD the answers are as follows: only 22% gave positive answer, 44% gave negative answer, whereas 34% did not answer.

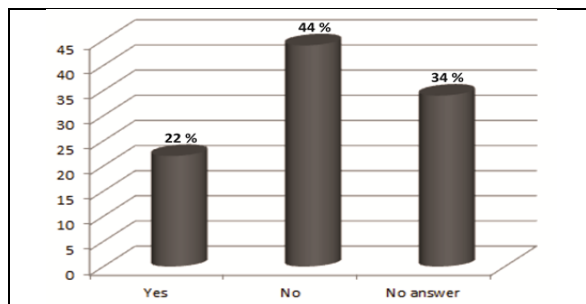


Figure 9. People familiar with the term pre-accessible funds IPARD

Question: Is there an agency or association in your residence that promotes tourism values (old crafts, handwork, etc.)?

63 out of 900 respondents gave positive answer, 354 gave negative answer, 367 do not know. 116 respondents gave no answer. This results pictures the lack of information provided to the population, as well as the small number of associations of this kind that could contribute to the affirmation and development of tourism values.

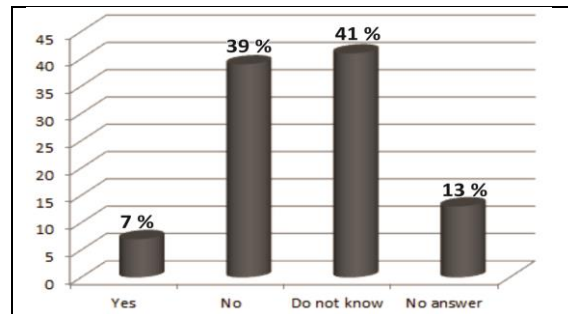


Figure 10. Agencies or associations for affirmation of tourism values

The answers to the question if they have ever rent their villa for the needs of tourist service are as follows: the majority of 87% said no, and 13% said sometimes.

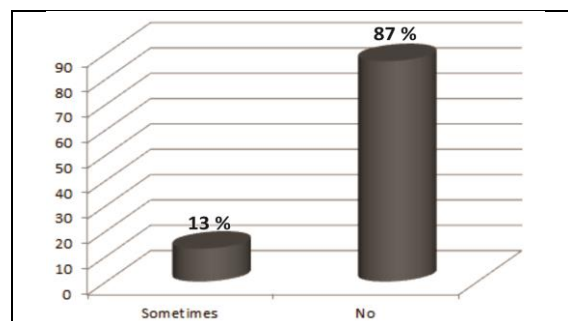


Figure 11. Renting villas for the needs of tourist service

The result gained from this question explains how the tourist potential about the accommodation is not used, and in the results of the following research the reasons for it can be seen.

The answers to the question if a travel agency or institution has asked them to rent their villa are as follows: none of the respondents answered positively.

The results from this question show the current condition, but also they show the interest and the role of the tourist agencies in the Republic of Macedonia for the development of tourism in these areas. If we take into consideration their role in the promotion and their total contribution in the tourism economy, it can be concluded that they are not interested in areas that are not established as well known and developed tourist destinations.

The answers to the question if they are going to rent their villas for tourism service are as follows: 67% said yes, 22% said no, whereas 11% do not know. This indicates that potential providers of tourism service need motivation to help them to start the business, i.e. to improve the tourism supply in this region.

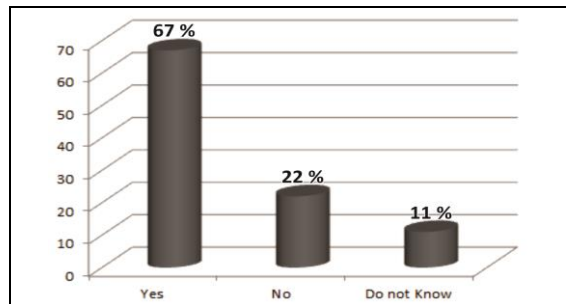


Figure 12. Renting villas in the future for the needs of tourist service

The answers to this question give good base for consideration towards the future development of tourism in the mountain Skopska Crna Gora.

The relation between local population and the owners of villas is important for successful development of the tourist supply. This relation evaluated as follows: 21% excellent, 38% very good, good 34%, bad 5%, and 2% restrained.

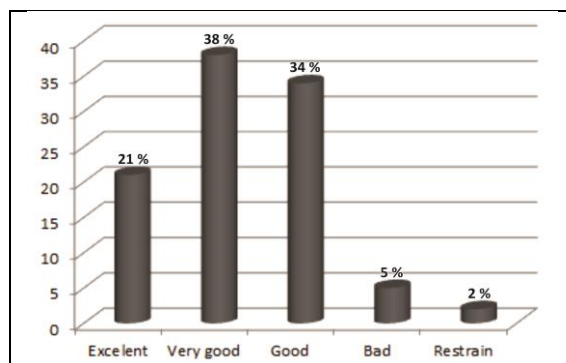


Figure 13. The relation between local population and the owners

Positive attitude of the local population towards the villa- owners, shows a good base for development of the rural tourism in these areas, as one of the basic factors on which the tourist satisfaction depends, and which these kind of tourism practice with special expectations. In this regard, the relation between the local population, villa- owners and the client is an inseparable triangle. To achieve competitive advantage and good tourist offer, and in relation to the previously mentioned triangle, especially important role has the education of the population and the villa-owners, which should be one of the priority goals in the process of creation of the strategy for tourism development of the municipality and state in general.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE SOUTHWEST PART OF SKOPSKA CRNA GORA

The above results indicate that a majority of population is not aware of the positive effect that the development of rural tourism has, as well as the alternative types of tourism in general. It can be assumed that the older population is the main reason for indifference.

Other factor of non- development is the fact that the majority of population lack their own financial resources to start a business, and they are not informed about the ways of finding financial resources which are available from both home and foreign funds (for example, IPARD). The use of financial resources from those funds for rural development and the development of rural tourism must be a priority for Republic Macedonia. It is necessary to make efforts and promotions, to increase the awareness of the local population, so that they are motivated to demand these resources.

Observing the results of the survey about the owners of the villas, we can say that the situation is quite better, yet still insufficient because of the insufficiency of promotion of possibilities that the owners of the villas can make use of. The capacities of villas are unused for no reasons, but they have a great potential for promoting the development of tourism. The analysis of survey results confirms the previous conclusion regarding the fact that the inhabitants are positively directed (59% are ready to rent their villas to tourists). Significant changes can be done by means of institutions and educated staff who will teach the inhabitants, point out the advantages of rural tourism development in Macedonia, and its positive examples, as well as examples of rural tourism leading countries.

According to the previously mentioned survey results, we can make a conclusion that the main reasons for the need of using the capacities are:

- Long period of transition;
- The lack of quality national strategy for development of tourism of many years;
- The local authorities have a strategy and action plans for the development of tourism, and programme priorities of local units are just a declarative decision (in general economical development of strategies and action development plans);
- The population is not interested because of the lack of motivation as well as lack of knowledge;
- The lack of interest of non- governmental organizations.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of rural tourism in the southwest part of mountain Skopska Crna Gora²

• STRENGTHS	• WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively good Traffic infrastructure • Adequate Climate • Preserved nature • Rich traditional heritage (folklore, songs, music...) • Well-preserved traditional architecture • Rich gastronomic and oenological offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrecognisable offer of rural Macedonia • lack of the offer • Insufficient education of population regarding the importance of rural tourism • Non-existence of quality promotional strategies • No quality projects for additional offer development • lack of tourist country family farms • Insufficient co-operation between tenderers in rural areas

² Source: adapted according to Alkier Radnic et al, 2012.

• OPPORTUNITIES	• THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of additional tourist infrastructure in rural areas (walkways, cycling paths, walking corridors) • Connecting the offer into "rural tourist stories" • Revival of cultural-historical material and non-material heritage in rural areas • Possibility of subsidies for decoration of traditional homes, promotion of crafts, etc. • Theme restaurants and bars, gastronomy and oenology • Pre-accession and cohesion EU funds • Improvement of legislation for accommodation offer in rural tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too strong competition of the neighbouring countries • Easy access to competitive destinations • Insufficiently developed awareness of the necessity for tourist valorisation of Macedonian rural areas • Insufficient interest of the local authorities • Pollution of water, air, rivers

The above SWOT analysis indicates the elements that are necessary to consider for creating successful rural tourist supply on mountain Skopska Crna Gora.

In order to provide intensive and successful development of a rural region, and rural tourism supply, it is necessary:

- Developing strategies and action plans for tourism development on a local level as a part of a balanced strategy of a rural development;
- Strengthening the local self government by founding departments responsible for planning, projecting and realization of action plans for tourism development;
- Insuring qualified human resources taking into account they are key factor for realization of competitive advantages in business;
- Creating conditions for using tourist capacities strictly complying the postulates of sustainable development;
- Overcoming legislative deficiencies;
- Increasing the awareness and education of inhabitants about the advantages that rural tourism offers, by organizing seminars, workshops, etc.
- Motivating the inhabitants to engage themselves in tourism development, financial and other help and support;
- Preparation of projects and elaborates for building eco-ethno villages (zone of old traditional houses);
- Decoration of the environment and additional supplies;
- Motivating the inhabitants to produce healthy organic food;
- Restoration, repairing and preserving the cultural monuments as anthropogenic resources;
- Implementation of marketing activities so as to introduce the new tourism content and development of tourism destination to potential tourists;
- Maximum use of available rural development resources and implementation of concrete projects;
- Organization of different festivals, workshops, souvenir shops and other traditional activities like tourist attraction (ex. Chestnut festival);
- Enabling the use of tourism supply to transit tourists;
- Education for the inhabitants for project development financed by national and international organizations;
- International and interregional cooperation intended for forming a common product, in order to gain a competitive distribution on tourism market (Macedonian and Balkan product).

CONCLUSION

Economical crisis had a great impact on the tourism sector worldwide and in Macedonia too. Worldwide information indicates that tourism will increase regarding the fact that modern tourists are more and more curious and IT educated, and are able to find out information about the destination by themselves.

The survey conducted in the region of Skopska Crna Gora proved that resources are not used in terms of their real potential. They can become a motivation for tourists who are predisposed to alternative forms of tourism. In order to create an attractive tourism supply it is important to involve the local authorities and the country, so as to create tourism development policies in terms of rural tourism. Rural tourism service users would, at the same time, take part in the development of other alternative types of tourism (eco tourism, cultural tourism, etc.), which would influence the development of the tourism supply of mountain Skopska Crna Gora, and adequate promotion would provide competitive position on tourism market.

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