**TRANSPORT COMMUNICATION IN THE FUNCTION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH – WEST PLANNING REGION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

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**1. Introduction**

This paper is the result of the research conducted as part of The Programme for Development of the Southwest planning region which is a mid-term planning document produced in accordance with the Methodology for Preparation of Development Programmes. As a primary strategic document the Programme for the Development of the Southwest planning region establishes the development objectives, priorities and measures based on the primary objectives and principles for equal regional development in the Republic of Macedonia. As a significant part of this Programme the strategic directions of activities in the field of transport communications can be identified. This occurs as a primary target of action because of the fundamental importance it has for tourism.

This paper will promote the positive impacts of achieving equal regional development with the aim of decreasing the disparity within this planning region, and to develop the potentials of all the region’s spheres which shall contribute to the best possible degree towards the continued prosperity of the country.

The planned equal development on the national and regional levels presupposes involvement of all the available potentials. This should generate benefits that shall apply to the creation of opportunities for everybody: development of the country as a whole, reduction of the apparent economic and social differences in the development of certain regions and municipalities, reduction of the differences in the quality of life between the urban and rural settlements, maintaining and development of special identities in certain parts of the regional entities and municipalities, including their affirmation, revitalisation and development of the regions with specific needs, creation of conditions for more prominent utilisation of the development potentials and resources, stronger competition, creation of conditions for the growth of the domestics and foreign investments and increasing of employment.

The main practical acquisition of this paper is to point out the need for improvement of living conditions, improvement of the infrastructure, creation of conditions for opening new businesses, raising the economic opportunities for the population and reduction of the migration from rural to the urban settlements. The paper gives an overview of the needed development of the Southwest planning region which encompasses the definition of the objectives, priorities and measures, which shall instigate activities that shall enable application for funds for their implementation.

A vision is given for the development of the area of Southwest planning region via qualitative and quantitative analyses that allow active and timely implementation of the projected goals.

**2. Composition of the region**

 The Southwest planning region is composed from the following units of Local Self-Government, with their respective urban / rural municipalities [1]:

**Table 1**

 Units of the Southwest planning region

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Local Self-Government Unit** | **Urban Municipality** | **Rural Municipality** | **Number of Settlements** |
| Struga | Struga |  | 51 |
| Ohrid | Ohrid |  | 29 |
| Kichevo | Kichevo |  | 7 |
| Debar | Debar |  | 18 |
| Makedonski Brod | Makedonski Brod |  | 51 |
| Drugovo |  | Drugovo | 28 |
| Vevchani |  | Vevchani | 1 |
| Vraneshtica |  | Vraneshtica | 15 |
| Debrca |  | Debrca | 30 |
| Zajas |  | Zajas | 13 |
| Oslomej |  | Oslomej | 16 |
| Plasnica |  | Plasnica | 4 |
| Centar Zhupa |  | Centar Zhupa | 23 |
| *Total Number of Settlements*  | 286 |



**Fig. 1.** Map of the region

 **3. Natural characteristics of the planning region**

 The Southwest planning region constitutes a special entity which is abundant with a number of natural and social values. These represent significant resources. Their mutual effect is very important for development, but separately they represent an important resource for development. In this sense, the Programme encompasses the characteristics of [2]: the geographic setting, the landscapes, the climate, the bodies of water, the soils and the bio-geographical values.

 **3.1. Geographic setting**

 The territory of the Southwest planning region covers an area of 3,340 km² and the following municipalities fall with it: Vevchani, Vraneshtica, Debar, Debrca, Drugovo, Zajas, Oslomej, Ohrid, Kichevo, Makedonski Brod, Plasnica, Struga and Centar Zhupa There are total of 286 settlements in the 13 mentioned municipalities [3].

 One of the advantages of the region is the fact that it borders on one side with Albania, therefore international exchange may be carried out through this region. The following border crossing points play a role in the function of international economic exchange Blato, Kjafasan and Sveti Naum. These border crossing points, in addition to exchange of goods, also allow fluctuation of the tourists and labour force therefore enabling more dynamic development of the region.

The airport "Saint Paul" in Ohrid plays a similar function in an exterritorial form.

 **3.2. Landscape**

The landscape of the Southwest planning region is mountainous and it is intertwined with many basins. Many high mountains are prevalent with a height of over 2,000 m above sea level. The early mountain range Jablanica with Crn Kamen (2,257 m) and Radik (2. 083 m) lies in the western part of the region, toward the border to Albania. On the northern side, the region is enclosed by the Deshat Mountain with the peak Krichin (2,241 m). Stogovo Mountain with the peak Bijak Dorak (2.268 m) and Babin Srt (2.241 m), and Bistra with the peaks Medenica (2,163 m) and Kjurkov Dol (2,011 m), Bukovikj Mountain with the pass Strazha (1,212 м.), Chelojca Mountain with the peak Dobra Voda (2,061 m) and Suva Gora (1,857 m) and Tabahon (1,748 m). On the eastern side, the region is encircled by the Karadjica Mountain and the peak Milenkov Kamen (2,217 m) and Bel Kamen (2,074 m), then Busheva Mountain with the peak Musica (1,788 m), Ilina Mountain with the peak Liska (1,908 m), Plakjenska Mountain with the peak Slavev Plakje (1,999 m) and Galichica with the peak Istok (1,663 m) and the peak Magaro (2,254 m) [4].

The Ohrid-Struga basin, which is located between the mountains Jablanica nad Galichica, is the largest in the region and in part it is occupied by Lake Ohrid, and consists of the Ohrid and Struga Fields. North of this basin is Debrca, which is separated by the Botun passage. The mountainous pass, Preseka (1,082 m) separates the Kichevo basin which is connected to the Porechie basin area.

Of the interesting and attractive forms in this region, special attention deserves the postvulcanic formation Duvalo located near the village of Kosel, in the immediate vicinity of Ohrid.

The region is characteristic by the extraordinary accessibility to caves considering the limestone composition of the mountains. Special mention needs to be made of the following: Alilica in the valley of river Tresonechka, Jaorec in Debrca, Kalin Dupka in the vicinity of Lazaropole, Cave Simka in the delta of the river Hadjina in Radika, Samoska Dupka on Galichica Mountain, the Vevchani Springs in Vevchani, the Slatino Springs, Peshna, the Slatina Cave and Orle in Porechie.

**3.3. Climate**

The landscape characteristics, the vicinity of the Adriatic Sea and the cyclonic and anticyclone centres in Europe, as well as the lake aquatorium are all factors that directly contribute to the climate of this region. The region is characteristic by its varying climatic conditions. In this region we can distinguish continental climatic complex, complexes with typical mountainous climatic characteristics and complexes with changing Mediterranean moderate – conditional characteristics [5]. The Mediterranean influence is especially prevalent in the Ohrid and Struga Basin, and certain influence can also be distinguished along the valley of the Black Drim River. The continental climatic characteristics are present in the Porchie and Kichevo region and the Debrca Basin, while mountainous climate with type characteristics is prevalent in heights above 1000 m. The air temperatures, at measuring stations, are provided in the following table:

**Table 2**

 Average temperatures

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Мерен пункт | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X | XI | XII | Год. |
| Дебар | 0.7 | 3.0 | 6.3 | 11.0 | 15.8 | 19.6 | 22.2 | 22.0 | 18.0 | 12.6 | 7.5 | 2.7 | 11.8 |
| Охрид | 1.7 | 3.1 | 5.6 | 9.8 | 14.4 | 18.4 | 20.8 | 20.7 | 16.9 | 11.8 | 7.7 | 3.8 | 11.2 |
| Кичево | -0.1 | 2.4 | 5.8 | 10.3 | 14.9 | 18.6 | 20.6 | 20.3 | 16.4 | 11.2 | 6.7 | 2.1 | 10.8 |
| М. Брод | 0.4 | 2.7 | 5.7 | 10.1 | 14.8 | 18.1 | 20.2 | 20.0 | 16.2 | 11.1 | 6.8 | 2.1 | 10.7 |
| Лазарополе | -2.3 | -1.3 | 1.2 | 5.3 | 10.2 | 13.7 | 15.9 | 15.7 | 12.1 | 7.6 | 3.7 | -0.1 | 6.8 |

The table shows that the Ohrid region has the mildest temperatures, while the lowest temperatures were recorded by the measuring station in Lazaropole, as a representative of the mountainous climate.

The Southwest planning region belongs to the group of areas with highest quantities of rainfall in the Republic of Macedonia which constitutes a special value which reflects most of the activities in this area.

This is of significance both for the grass vegetation of the pastures and for the winter recreational and sporting activities.

The region is characteristic for the great amount of windiness which influences the quality of life in the region. However, this phenomenon can be acknowledged in the function of installing sustainable sources of energy. The reasons for the windiness are due the differences in air pressure occurring between the mountainous and basin areas.

**3.4. Hydrographical characteristics**

The quantity of rainfalls occurring in the region, in ample amounts, represents a factor for the significantly developed hydrography. The wealth of water resources represents a basis for water supply to the households, for irrigation of the agricultural fields, production of electrical power, industrial production and tourist activities.

Lake Ohrid has a dominant position in the region. It is one of the oldest lakes in the work. Its area is 348.8 km2 of which 229.9 m2 is on the Macedonian side. Its deepest point is 286 m, while its average depth is 144.8 m. The lake’s volume of water is 54.280 km2, which means that it is the largest aquatorial objects and water potential, as well as a reservoir of warmth [6]. The water temperature is relatively high. The average annual temperature is 13.6 С°. The average monthly temperatures during the winter period of the year span from 6.3 C° to 7 Cº The lake does not freeze which is a favourable circumstance for the use of the water. During the four month summer period in the year the average monthly water temperatures are above 18 C°, which designates the duration of the season for swimming activities. The transparency of the water is among the greatest values in the world with 21.5 m visibility. The chemical composition of the water and its sweet character (128/l dissolved salts) is favourable for water supply, which indicates that it is the largest accumulation for this purpose in Ohrid. Via the Black Drim River it constitutes the main water supply to the lakes Globochica and Debar.

The region also has glacial lakes. These are Lake Vevchani, Podgorec and the Labunishta lakes on Jablanica and the Upper and Lower Lake, the Black Lake and Lake Marusha on Stogovo. These lakes offer opportunities for tourist recreational purposes. Some of them, like Lake Podgorec for instance, are used for water supply and irrigation. But, the rarity of these types of formations should be protected in the best possible matter.

The watershed of the Crni Drim River together with the Lake Ohrid watershed region, within this area is (4,198 км2), while the immediate watershed of this river to the border with Albania is 1,567 km2. It has a regulated riverbed and coasts along the length of the City of Struga and this is considered a special attraction. Its water and the water from Belichka and Vevnchani rivers and the influent river Lanunishka are appropriate for water supply and irrigation.

The River Sateska which used to be an influent of the Black Drim River has been redirected to flow into Lake Ohrid. This issue is a topic of discussion among experts and scientist in regards to the pollution of Lake Ohrid. There are proposals the old riverbed to be restored. However, this can threaten the hydrological stability of Lake Ohrid and if the erosional matter is not restored it can be a factor of accelerated atrophy of Lake Globochica. That is why it needs to be repaired with sand traps and accumulations.

There are significant water springs in this watershed region, such as the springs at St. Naum and Biljanini Izvori. The water capacity is 6.5-11 m3/sec, or rather 30-120l/sec [7]. Other important springs are the Belichka River spring, the Vevchani and Labunishta Springs.

The Radika River is one of the cleanest rivers in the Southwest Planning region, and its water feeds Lake Debar [8].

River Treska is a significant resource for water supply, irrigation and construction of fish farms. It is this river, with its spring section at Izvor, through the flow in the region is characterised with the largest abundance of fish farms.

**3.5. Biogeographical characteristics**

The Southwest planning region is characteristic by the diverse abundance of plant and animal species.

According to the last forest inventory, the area covered under forest in the region is 183,105 ha. The forests are mainly composed of deciduous trees, distributed according to stands. That is the stand of oak forests, often with contents of chestnut trees and beech trees which is the most prevalent. Conifer forests are represented with 7.74% on the total forest surface area. This structure is relatively unfavourable, but it does constitute a significant potential for the wood processing industry.

Grasslands in the form of pastures and meadows take up a surface area of 60,136 ha and it constitutes a basis for the development of cattle husbandry.

The animal wildlife is represented by various types of large and small game, poultry and fish. They constitute the basis for the hunting and fishing activities.

 **4. Cultural development of the southwest region**

The Southwest planning region has rich cultural heritage, extraordinary cultural, historical and art assets which confirms the existence and continuity of civilization in the region during the millenniums. The archaeological explorations are dynamic, and there are churches and monasteries with priceless architecture and frescos. The building groups are very important for the history of the architecture. In the region there are many towers and fortresses, monuments and memorials, buildings of the Islam architecture, bazaars and other historical and urban-architectonic structures, industry objects and real properties [9]. In the region there are also culture institutions where very important manifestations take place. The ethnography in the greatest part of the region has authentic characteristics.

According to the National register of cultural heritage, in the Southwest planning region there are 350 different cultural-historical sights. The city of Ohrid with its natural rarity and cultural treasure is protected by UNESCO.

Ohrid-Struga region is the richest region, not only in the Southwest region but also within the country. The number of cultural monuments registered in the Central register of Macedonia, in Ohrid is 69, and in Struga 30. In the other municipalities there are registered monuments.

There are Neolithic findings in Ohrid-Struga valley. (Crkveni livadi – Vranishta – near Struga and Usta – Struga and Bay of the Bones – near Ohrid – palafitte settlements, Gorno Sredoreche – Debrca and Dolno Trno – Debrca).

The Metal Age is characterized with localities from the Copper Age in Usta – Struga, from the Bronze Age in Crkveni livadi – Vranishta, and from Iron Age in Trbenishta – Municipality of Debrca and Gorna Porta (Upper Gate) – Ohrid, Lozishte – Rechica-Ohrid.

From pre-Roman Age, the localities Lichnid-Ohrid, St.Erzamo-Ohrid, Kale-Kodzadzik - Centre Zupa Municipality, Udovo—Municipality of Debar, St.Ilija-Delogozhda—Municipality of Struga and Ohrid Fortress are registered.

From the Roman Age there is a cultural heritage in the locality Lihnid-Ohrid.

From the Early Christian Age, the following localities are registered: Plaoshnik, St. Erazmo and Studenchishta in Ohrid, Radolishta and Oktisi – Municipality of Struga.

The most popular churches and monasteries are: Monastries of St Naum and St. Pantelejmon – Plaoshnik from IX century, St.Sofia, XI century, St. Bogorodica Perivlepta XIII, St.John the Theologian-Kaneo XIII century, St.Erazmo XIV century, St.Stefan middle century, St. Nicolas Bolnichki XIV century, St.Bogorodica Bonichka XIV century, St.Mali Vrachi XIV century, St.Constantine and Helena XIV, St.Dimitry, XIV century and St. Bogorodica Celnica, XIV century in Ohrid, St.Bogorodica Zahumska, XIV century; St.Bogorodica Pestanska XIV century, St.Spas-Leskoec-near Ohrid, St.Petka—Velgoshti, the Ascendance od St. Holy Mother XV century Velestovo-near Ohrid, St.Nicolas - Openica XIV century, St. Gorgija - Rechica - near Ohrid and St. Gorgi Vrbjani XIII century, All Saints (Si Sveti) XV century - Leshani, St. Gorgi XV century – Godivje and St. Bogorodica – Vrbjani XV century, all in Municipality of Debrca.

In the region there are monuments of the Islamic culture. Among the most important are the following: Hajdar Pasha Mosque from XV century and Zeynel Abidin Pasha Mosque from XVII century and Helvati Tekke in Ohrid.

The towers and the fortified towns are important monuments in the culture of this region. The dominate place takes the Ohrid Fortress, locality Gradishte and Kiklopski Dzidini (Cyclops Fortress) above the St.Erazmo in Ohrid. The localities which deserve to be treated according to high valorizations criteria are the Kale in Kodjadjik - Municipality of Centar Zhupa and Udovo-Municipality of Debar. Special cultural attraction is the fortress Devina Kula – Devich, as well as the town Kale Stolovatec- Belica in Municipality of Makedonski Brod.

In the group of culture monuments as old-town architecture and old-town complexes and houses are part of the cultural heritage kept despite the great impact of the contemporary pressures of the urbanization and new architecture. Among these, the most important are the complexes in Varosh in Ohrid and the Houses of Robevci and Urania and in Struga, the old part of the town.

The level of cultural development in the Southwest planning region can be determined from the number of the institutions in the field of culture. Among the most significant are the following: Institute for protection of cultural monuments in Ohrid including the National Museum, the Museum of Slavic writing culture and the Gallery of Icons in the complex St. Bogorodica Perivlepta and other museum establishments. In Struga, the most significant is the Natural and Scientific Museum Nikola Nezlobinski, the Memorial House of Miladinov Brothers and the newly opened Gallery of Icons in Struga and near Struga.

The cultural centres and houses of culture in Ohrid, Struga, Debar, Kichevo and Makedonski Brod represent a factor for development of the culture and the same should be improved in order to prevent the tendency of their extinguishing.

The low number of libraries, especially in the rural areas is characteristic for this region. The rural development should be founded on this segment of the raising of the cultural level.

The region is well-known by the most significant international and national manifestations. These are: Ohrid Summer Festival, Struga Poetry Evenings, Balkan Festival of Folk Songs and Dances, Prlichev’s Orations, Velestovo Poetry Evenings, Struga’s Musical Fall, Folk Costumes Exhibition – Struga, Festival of Folk Song and Dances (Kend jeho)-Struga, Days of Culture – Debar, Days of Poetry – Debar, Festival of Theater – Debar, Vevchani Carnival, Podgorec Goces's Days, Belchishta Art Colony – Debrca, Art Colony Kichevo and many art exhibitions.

The ethnography is the result of the long cultural tradition and multiculture. That is reflected in the popular art of construction, industry activities, the food, traditional costumes and folk songs and dances.

Regarding the cultural heritage, many valuables and localities i.e. cultural-historical monuments are located in the rural areas in the hills and therefore activities for their protection can be undertaken.

**5. Transport infrastructure**

The inciting of equal development should take into consideration the characteristics of the transport, utility and energy infrastructure.The improving of the infrastructure will enable, all by itself, engagement of new labour in the process of projecting and construction and more important enhancing tourism development.

The transport infrastructure includes the characteristics of the road, air and aquatic traffic.

**5.1. Road network**

The Southwest planning region is relatively well covered with highways, regional and local roads.

The total length of the highways is 154 km, and having in mind this construction (together with the South-eastern planning region) it belongs in the group of planning regions with the biggest participation in the total highway network in Republic of Macedonia (1 123km). The length of the regional roads in the Southwest planning region is 471km. According to this indicator, it is a matter of relatively good coverage in relation to the remaining of the planning regions since it is located in the middle group of regions according to their road construction from this ranking.

The road network is relatively well developed also in view of the length of the local roads. The length of these roads is 1 301 km and it can be said that according to this indicator the Southwest panning region has the longest local road network.

The factor providing the relation between the length of the road network and the surface of the region in km2 for the Southwest planning region is 0.58 and it is in the frames of the level in Macedonia (0.55). This factor is significantly left behind the Skopje planning region (0.92). One can draw a conclusion that it is necessary to achieve the level of construction established in the Skopje planning region.

With regards of the road network quality, this region characterizes with exceptionally bad condition of the roads especially the highroads and regional roads. Majority of the highroads in the Southwest planning region are built 30-40 years ago and they are in exceptionally bad condition since they have been re inadequately maintained and beforehand reconstructed. Such are the sections Straza – Kicevo – Podmolje (M-4) and Ohrid – Bukovo (M-5). The regional road Kicevo – Makedonski Brod is also in bad condition.

The regional road Struga – Debar can be found in extremely bad condition, representing a factor that jeopardizes the safety of the passengers. With a view to the fact that the communication from Boshkov Most to Izvor (connecting Debar to the highroad M-4) has not been completed, this municipality has periphery position in the Southwest planning region.

Also the establishment of highroad communication from Makedonski Brod to Skopje is of extreme importance, with which one could introduce interactive and developing connection between these two differently developed regions.

The development of the local roads in the region should be in function of preventing moving out, village vitalization, remigration and immigration as well as developing the tourism, cultivating the forest and the overall economic development.

**5.2. Railway**

The railway as infrastructure in the Southwest planning region has modest characteristics and it is part of the underdevelopment on state level. The total length of the tracks is 27km from a total of 682 kilometres throughout the country.

Such low level of construction establishment in the Southwest planning region is not the only negative point. The factor of density of the construction establishment is 8.56 and it is remarkably left behind the factor on state level (27). The cities Ohrid, Struga, Debar and Makedonski Brod remain uncovered. From this region, only Kicevo is part of this network. Basic problem of the region is the incomplete railway network and the fact that it ends with dead end. Along with other disadvantages, the current railway station can be found in bad condition in view of the technical equipment. This reflects the transport of passengers and goods.

These conditions point out to the need of undertaking measures for full transformation of this sector.

**5.3. Air traffic**

The air traffic in the Southwest planning region is carried out through the airport St. Paul the Apostle located in Podmolje (municipality of Debarca). With its international character it represents a significant potential in function of an equal development. The expansion of the airport should be in accordance with the movements in the production sectors and in the tourism as leading service sector. It fully covers this space. The only negative surrounding is the bad access to it, in interregional sense which points out to the need of undertaking processes to make improvements in this direction.

**5.4. Aquatic traffic**

The aquatic traffic in the Southwest planning region is reported as lake traffic on the Ohrid Lake. The current transport is only for passengers in function of tourism. The relations enabling transport are from Ohrid to St. Naum and Hotel Biser – Struga region. It is necessary to build a marina in Struga and to undertake all measures to establish traffic connection with Pogradec, Albania, thus enabling transportation of passengers and goods in the frames of the region and on cross-bordering level.

**6. Tourism development in the planning region**

The tourism is the most common characteristic of the Southwest planning region. This region is the most developed tourism region in Macedonia. The natural characteristics, rich culture heritage, protected areas and the long tradition are base for the fast development of the tourism. Furthermore, this region has many resources that have possibility to be included in the tourist offer. There are many places in this region, which can be developed as places for alternative tourism.

These are solid basis for acceleration of the other industry branches, development of the culture and decrease in the unemployed rate and etc. The traffic connection is a basis for development of the tourism. But, also it should be considered that the projected traffic and infrastructure systems can promote the future development of the tourism. The tourism will promote the start of new cycle in the structuring of the infrastructure.

**6.1. Accommodation capacities**

The accommodation capacities in the tourism have double meaning. On one hand, they are the most significant receptive factor of the tourism development, and on the other hand they are an indicator of the development level.

The analysis of the data for accommodation capacities refers to the scope, dynamics and the structure of the units included.

In the Southwest planning region, the number of the rooms is 16.400 with 42.425 beds [10]. In Macedonia, the total number of rooms I 26.503, which means that 62% are in the Southwest planning region. The number of beds in Macedonia is 71.021, which means that 59,7% are part of the capacities in the Southwest planning region.

**6.2. Visiting rate**

According to the analysis of the visiting rate, the number of visitors in the last analyzed year is 233.218, which means participation of 47% of the total visits in Macedonia.

Regarding the dynamics of the visits, it can be noticed that the number of tourists in the period from 2004 to 2008 is increasing, that is from 222.950 to 276.669.

The structure of the visits is relatively unfavourable. That is a result to the fact that the number of the domestic tourists is higher than the number of foreign tourists. The number of domestic tourists is 193.662, and the number of foreign tourists is 83.007.

Most of the tourists are coming from Serbia, then Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Turkey, Slovenia and Croatia. Thus, the most significant sphere is the Balkans, and Serbia has the leading role.

These characteristics indicate that the offer and the promotion activities in the region should be directed towards the countries in the vicinity considering the visiting rate, and the conquering of new spheres should be based on the conducting of exploring activities.

**6.3. Tourist expenditure**

The effects of the tourist visits and stay, which is of the utilization of the receptive capacities, are reflected via the consumption. The Southwest planning region in the scope of visits and overnight stays participate with 65% of the achieved incomes, and the number of overnight stays is 249.315 which is a base for calculation of the consumption from the tourism. The indicator of the funds for tourism purpose is around 80 dollars per day all over the world. Based upon these indicators, the income achieved from the tourism in the Southwest planning region is around 20 million dollars.

**6.4. Types of tourism**

The Southwest planning region is characteristic for its concentration of accommodation capacities, income gained from the tourism and the consumption realized from the tourism, above all in the Ohrid-Struga region. This concentration of development realizations is a result of the great natural and anthropogenic resources in the area. The dominant place is taken by Lake Ohrid and the cultural heritage. Thus, the lake and the culture tourism are the main types of tourism. The development of the lake tourism should consider the capacities of the Debarca and Globochica Lake.

The visible concentration of protected area is a basis for development of ecotourism. The main resource of the ecotourism is the National Park Galichica, and declaring Jablanica as national par gives a new perspective for this type of tourism. This type of tourism finds its resource basis in other areas in the regions too. In this sense, Porechie deserves special attention. Nevertheless, it can be noted that the development potentials of this type of tourism are not exploited, and have good perspective.

Thermal-bath tourism is a development category whose resources are concentrated in the Debar valley. The development capacities based upon the water capacity and temperatures are much greater than the activated and thus the thermal-bath tourism in the region deserves special attention as perspective.

The mountain tourism in the Southwest planning region has solid attractive resource basis. The height of the mountains, suited ski terrains and the climate characteristics are advantages for activation of this kind of tourism. The mountain tourism nowadays is in form of mount climbing and rare alpine visits, while there is no infrastructure required for the ski activities. (The only modest cable car in Vushni village is out of order).

There are spatial possibilities and relatively satisfying presence of fauna species for hunting and fishing tourism. Yet, the organized forms of this type of tourism activities are rare and insufficiently present.

The transit tourism is a type of tourism which can be developed in this region based upon the develop road network. This type of tourism has special importance considering the fact that the region is a part of the group of area with opportunities for cross border cooperation and road connections with the neighbouring countries.

Despite the main types of tourism, the Southwest planning region has opportunities for selective development forms [11]. These should provide decrease in the concentration of the visits and stay within the mass tourism. Still, there are not such forms in the region. This type of tourism is occasional. So, the rural tourism exists only in restaurant offer (Vevchani), and not through mountain activities. Thus, it is necessary for the regional development to consider these opportunities and to project their development in the region.

**7. Swot analysis of the region**

This analysis primarily takes into account the elements of tourism and transport in this region. Thus, it relates to tourism development in the region influenced by the traffic characteristics.

***Advantages***:

* Available natural resources and relatively clean environment, with solid infrastructural basis, international airport, border zones and crossings;
* Existence of a large number of production potentials and capacities, tradition in the artisanship;
* The large agricultural surfaces and favourable climate for cultivation of wheat crops, aromatic and Mediterranean plants, industrial and fodder crops, vegetables, fruit and vine;
* Large pastures for breeding various livestock, developed activity with fishponds and fish stocking
* Development of basic tourism types, rich attractive fund with development potentials existing capacities hotel accommodation, seats in the catering and increased tourist consumption;
* Existing of archaeological sites and artifacts, churches, monasteries, mosques and tekkes, towers and fortresses, memorial monuments for which a solid protection has been provided, active cultural institutions, regular cultural manifestations during the year;
* National and international environment protection, with conditions for production of healthy food.

***Weaknesses:***

* Falling behind in the GDP on a state level with lowest gross salary per employee, due to the low productivity, competitiveness and poor export performances, resulting in high workforce costs per product unit;
* Insufficient use of modern technologies, insufficiently developed logistic infrastructure and industry, unequal development of the municipalities and places within the region;
* Deficit of applicable studies and development programmes, weak marketing planning and absence of a sufficient number of associations in the business community on all levels, but also an inadequate educational structure of the population pursuant to the needs of the economy;
* Lack of investments due to limiting conditions for business development particularly due to law and property affairs, inadequate infrastructure, urban planning and promotions, as well as a poor legal application and efficiency;
* Poor quality of the roads due to oldness and insufficient maintenance, a road and railway network the complete construction of which is still not finalized, poor marking and a lack of resources and signalization;
* Poor connectivity of the tourist potentials, unfavourable foreign visit and stay signifying weak utilization of the accommodation capacities, as well as a very poor offer for alternative types of tourism;
* Insufficient signalization for the cultural monuments, weak inter-institutional communication and insufficient care for the theatre;
* Increase in the quantity of garbage and its uncontrolled disposal, air pollution.

***Opportunities:***

* Openness towards foreign investment activities;
* The high unemployment rate, particularly large number of persons i.e. technological redundancy, in the region with favourable qualifications and experience is an exceptional opportunity for the correct directing and utilization of the human resources;
* Sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural treasure through utilization of the instruments for support and development of the micro regions.

***Threats:***

* Drain of young staff abroad and decline of the financial power of the population;
* Incompliance between the central and local authorities with regard to the resources management;
* Inadequate care for the protection of the environment, i.e. not taking into consideration all the aspects, and that can pose danger to the traditional advantage that exists with the natural and cultural treasure.

**8. Priorities and measures of traffic and tourism in the planning region**

From the previously mentioned SWOT analysis we can conclude that necessary are given strategic priority acquisitions through concrete measures in the Southwest planning region of the Republic of Macedonia in order to create favorable conditions for a balanced sustainable tourism development through actions in the areas of tourism and traffic.

Therefore, the main priority in the domain of traffic will be: “*Creating a developed and modern road network, with sustainable management of the water potential, developed educational and information and communications infrastructure*”.

In this direction the concrete measures would be the following:

* Modernization and updating the existing regional and local roads and construction of new by preparing a technical documentation – in cooperation with the Agency for National Roads and LSGU as holders, within the region;
* Human resources development in ICT and initiatives for creating an adequate infrastructure in the region;
* Promotion of the educational process for different stakeholders on a regional level.

On the other hand, regarding tourism the priority would be: “*Attractive tourist destination with rich and integrated tourist offer, based on sustainable utilization and protection of the cultural and natural treasure*”.

Concrete measures would be:

* Optimal usage of the natural an cultural and historical heritage in function of the tourism development;
* Creating recognisability and protection of the cultural and historical heritage and the natural treasure in the areas protected by law;
* Initiatives for developing different types of tourism – lake, mountain, village, spa, religion, agricultural, healthcare, sport, transit, as well as other alternative forms of tourism (speleological, hunting, etc.);
* Human resources development in the travel agencies and tourism associations, as well as initiatives for their networking;
* Promotional activities for representing the tourist potentials of the region;
* Improving the utilization of the hotel and catering capacities and other type of resources for raising the degree of tourism development.

**9. Conclusion**

This paper gives an overview of the potential opportunities for the Southwest planning region in terms of sustainable tourism development. The rare treasures available in the region through the prism of natural features and cultural potentials represent an excellent opportunity for developing a great number of basic and complementary tourist activities. As the most developed tourist region in the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, however, it is important to mention the problems that arise in this area. It is necessary to stress the importance that the traffic linkage has in this respect.

Therefore, the importance of integrated transport and tourism development is indicated that will result in a overall more balanced development of this region.

This is only possible through adequate efforts in the field of strategic directions and tourist development through appropriate measures and specific activities of all stakeholders represented in the Southwest planning region.

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