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## Current State of Tourism Development in the Balkan Region

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The article analyzes changes in the region caused by the end of wars and the formation of new states. The conditions and prospects of development as well as touristic business have been analyzed. Special attention is given to the most popular tourist attractions in every country of the region.

**Key words:** tourism, Balkan region, development, economy.

**Потурай О. В., Балак І. О. Сучасний стан розвитку туризму Балканського регіону.** У статті досліджено зміни в регіоні, які викликані закінченням війни і формуванням нових держав. Проаналізовано стан та перспективи розвитку туристичного бізнесу. Особливу увагу приділено найбільш відвідуваним туристичним місцям кожної країни регіону та їх характеристики.

**Ключові слова:** туризм, Балканський регіон, розвиток, економіка.

**Потурай О. В., Балак И. О. Современное состояние развития туризма в Балканском регионе.** В статье исследуются изменения в регионе, вызванные окончанием войны и формированием новых государств. Проанализированы состояние и перспективы развития туристического бизнеса. Особое внимание уделяется популярным туристическим местам каждой страны региона.

**Ключевые слова:** туризм, Балканский регион, развитие, экономика.

**Statement of research problem and its significance.** The value of tourism in the world is growing, due to the influence of tourism on the economies of individual countries or regions. At the present stage of development tourism is the leading branch of economy in many countries. Balkan region has very interesting touristic resources as well as unique, natural, historical and cultural sights. Number of states, natural and climate zones, diverse terrain of this part of the world, ancient architecture, the monuments of ancient cultures and a large number of higher educational institutions contribute to the development of various kinds of tourism (business, scientific, sports, educational). The region of the Balkans is frequently visited by tourists from all over the world.

**Analysis of recent studies of this problem.** In domestic and foreign literature this topic is not a widely investigated issue due to the fact that most of the research works tackle the above mentioned issue of the development of tourism considering the whole territory of Europe. Researchers exploring touristic industry in the region have different approaches to defining the basis of advantages and disadvantages such as activation of the tourist business in the region, due to the cessation of military conflicts, the increase in the investments and the noticeable shift of the economy towards the dominance of services, including tourism. Among the scientists who researched these issues it's worth mentioning the following: A. Amosha, M. Bagrov, V. Berezhnaya, V. Havoretsky, G. Holembysky, P. Hudz, A. Dembsky, V. Yevdokimenko, A. Yefremov, N. Konischeva, A. Kornak, B. Shvetsov, Z. Kruchek, L. Mazurkevich, V. Mamutov, A. Novakovska, V. Ringer.

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the touristic potential of the region and show the current state of tourism development. **The objective of the article** is to analyze the peculiarities of the Balkan region in tourism and to identify the main prospects for touristic businesses as well as to determine the influence of external factors on the development of tourism of the region.

**The main material and proof of it's results.** Tourism nowadays is the biggest branch in the worldwide frames of economy and business with projections for increase on the global level. A large number of highly-developed countries and countries on the stage of transition defined tourism as priority sector for development. Numerous economic sectors receive financial benefits from foreign and domestic tourists as

tourism includes a big range of services. Tourists need and pay for many services such as transportation: airline, railway, bus, taxi and car rental services. They buy souvenirs, clothes, literature; they also visit theaters, museums, sights of cultural heritage, national parks where they pay for the entrance tickets. Tour guides receive money from tourists for different tours, hunting, fishing, and skiing. For example, in the Republic of Macedonia, foreign tourists contribute 11 % of the to the national economy in the area of shopping. Tourists pay for accommodation, food and beverages. Bosses and employees, traders, producers, farmers, butchers, groceries, wineries, breweries, bankers, gas stations all have benefits from tourism. Certainly the biggest benefits from tourism to the government are taxes which are generated and paid by foreign tourists.

Situated in the southeastern Europe, the Balkans are fast becoming one of the most popular destinations for a lot of travellers. The countries on the Balkan Peninsula are rich in greenery and beautiful nature. They offer excellent conditions for both winter and summer vacations. It's a region of incredible untouched nature, delectable cuisines, rich historical lands begging for exploration and understanding, cool ocean breezes across golden sandy beaches, awe-inspiring mountain peaks dotted with centuries-old villages and genuinely friendly and smiling locals.

During the centuries, especially throughout the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Balkans were the territory of numerous conflicts – two Balkan wars in the period of 1912–1913, wars in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia. From the tourist point of view of the historians, linguists and culture experts metaphoric descriptions of the Balkans «the black» contain an incredibly positive touristic potential. The tourist attractiveness and respectively the tourist success of the territory are based initially on the natural, historical, cultural, ethnical, religious, linguistic, social and political diversity, which are authentic and significant tourist resources for transforming the Balkan region into competitive tourist destination. The Balkans are also now quite a safe place to travel around, so there's no excuse not to visit this wonderful part of the world.

New locations appear on the global market which become appealing to the competitors and also bring new possibilities. Considering the global competition, it is very challenging for the brand management of the Balkan region to attract investors and visitors. The Balkan countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Moldova and Slovenia.

In the twelve independent Balkan countries there live more than 70 million people with slavic, roman, alaric, greek and turkish origin, followers of 3 different religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism), using two different alphabets and speaking languages, belonging to 5 different language families. The region of the Balkans is extensively visited by tourists from all over the world. There is a galore of attractions in each country of the region. Every nation is the home of numerous wonderful places that attract millions of people all the year round who travel to the Balkans and stay at Hotels of all categories in the countries of The Balkan region.

There are a lot of important preconditions for common marketing of the Balkans as a tourist destination. The first: the Balkan countries are distinguished by similar problems of tourism management: highly territorial concentration of the accommodation and of the tourist flow around the water basins, strongly expressed seasonality of the tourist visits and strong dependence on the big Western European, transnational tour-operators. The second: the Balkan countries keep up approximately the same price levels. The third: the countries offer similar touristic products – sea recreational tourism, mountain recreational tourism, cruise tourism, spa tourism, cultural tourism, country tourism, wine tourism, religious tourism, shopping tourism.

Finally, the Balkan countries have common key and target markets – their basic regional tourist market is Europe (with the biggest share of 90–95 %) and common key national target markets are Germany, England, France, Italy, the Scandinavian countries.

By 2010 the eleven Balkan countries possessed together 60 objects with exceptional cultural or natural significance for the human heritage, included in the UNESCO list of the world natural and cultural heritage.

The opening of the Balkans and other countries in South East Europe more than a decade ago has fundamentally altered the political and economic landscape of the European continent. The region has been transformed into a marketplace with dynamic growth, attracting a significant amount of foreign direct investment. Much of this success can be attributed to the efforts of local governments, international organizations, and other non-governmental institutions.

Table 1

**Number of objects from the Balkan countries included in the UNESCO list of the world cultural and natural heritage for the year 2012\* [3]**

| <b>Country</b>                              | <b>Number of objects</b> |
|---|--------------------------|
| Albania                                     | 2                        |
| Bosnia and Hercegovina                      | 2                        |
| Bulgaria                                    | 9                        |
| Croatia                                     | 7                        |
| Greece                                      | 16                       |
| Macedonia                                   | 1                        |
| Montenegro                                  | 2                        |
| Romania                                     | 7                        |
| Serbia                                      | 4                        |
| Slovenia                                    | 1                        |
| Turkey                                      | 9                        |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>60</b>                |
| <b>% from the total number in the world</b> | <b>6,6</b>               |

Foreign investors have shared information on their experiences and on best practices within countries in which they have invested. This direct approach with authorities and cooperation with several international organizations has helped to create a more accurate picture of the investment landscape, especially in touristic business within various countries in the region.

A large number of investments are aimed at promoting the region as a tourist destination. The Balkan region name has been changed into South Eastern Europe, because the former was considered as a negative term by the West because of the wars that took place in this region.

This region is popular among a large number of tourists from around the world. In geographical aspect, the main market for cultural tourism in the Balkans appears to be Europe. The Balkan countries may rely on the interest and concern of West Europe for the fate of its «younger and poor brother». The second place in the significance for cultural tourism in the Balkans is given to the distant markets of the USA, Japan and China. The tourists from these countries would be interested in the unique peculiarities of each Balkan nation and most of all the cultural treasure of the separate countries. For countries like Germany, England and France the interest in the historical and cultural past of Europe has always existed. That is why for them the availability of cultural tours is obligatory. The USA market has always displayed big interest towards the Classical Greece. The products like «Odyssey's Journeys» and «Following the Steps of Orpheus» would be interesting for the American tourist.

Great benefit is the ability of countries to cooperate on the development of the region as a tourist destination. In my opinion, Balkan countries should focus their activities on: creating common standards for the quality of touristic service in the region, coming out with common offers for third markets, increasing the power of negotiations with the big west tour-operators, common PR efforts for establishment of a more friendly image of the Balkans.

Prolonging of the tourist season also plays a big role in touristic activity of the region, because a lot of countries don't have opportunities and developed holiday destinations in the cold season. The aim of collaboration of the marketing efforts in the countries of the region is to gain some advantages, as for example – attractive prices, quick and easy access to the desired tourist attractions, good communication between the subjects of the tourist supply and etc.

A very important issue, while creating common products is the achievement of synergy between the characteristics, which define the attractiveness of the region. The efficient implication of the resources and attractions of each country is the key to the improvement of the total attractiveness of the transnational destination. The cultural products which have strong synergetic intensity in the Balkans can be the theme routes, devoted to Byzantine and Ottoman's Empire, Thracian culture, Christianity, Islam and etc. Countries like Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, Romania, which are rich in religious objects (monasteries, churches, cliff monasteries and etc.), are able together to offer a unique product, bound with the «orthodox Christianity». The countries from the Balkan Peninsula could take advantage of their diverse resources and offer a big variety of tourist products.

Every country tends to build its own country brand to attract more tourists and because of that considers other countries to be its competitors. According to the study the biggest Slovenian competitors are the following: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Each of these countries offers similar touristic products and attempts to attract the same target tourism markets. Having examined the challenges and opportunities of promoting Montenegro as the destination for sustainable tourism in the post-civil war era of the former Yugoslavia, the country was given a unique branding status. The terms imaging and branding are of great importance especially for post war countries that have a negative past. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that until recently was associated with war. To change their image Bosnia and Herzegovina should first distance themselves from their negative past. All countries of this region make great steps to popularize themselves and to create a positive opinion of their touristic service.

Tourism was one of the initial clusters as an industry with significant potential to contribute to Balkan region economic development, as well as the sustainable development and protection of its natural and cultural heritage. Tourism is a diversified and highly competitive industry. Albania is not well positioned for mass market tourism because of poor infrastructure and extensive regional competition in the traditional mass market tourist segments like «sun and sand». This country is, however, potentially well positioned for the development of specialty tourism segments such as adventure travel, ecotourism, cultural tourism and agro-tourism. Based on an industry assessment, it was decided that the focus should be placed on «Specialty Tourism» including adventure and sports, culture and the archaeological and historical heritage of Albania, where Albanian tourism industry could develop competitive advantages. In Albania, tourists may visit Butrint famous for Roman ruins. Other places of historical importance include Gjirokastra, the Ionian coast, and Berati. The northern portion of the country has impressive mountain scenery.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina places to visit include Sarajevo and Mostar. Sarajevo offers wonderful scenic beauty of mountains. Mostar has the Old Bridge – a famous Ottoman architecture. Other historical sites include towns as Travnik and Jajce Bjelasnica.

Bulgaria is well known for numerous mountain ranges. The Rila and Pirin ranges have good hiking trails. Rila Monastery is another attraction in this region. To see the Roman ruins, tourists may visit Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, and Koprivshtitsa. Sofia provides a convenient base for excursions to western Bulgaria.

The beaches are no doubt attractive in the Adriatic coast, Croatia. But the highlights of the coast include Dubrovnik, the walled city which is an example of 17<sup>th</sup> century city planning. Tourists may also pay a visit to Pula to see the one of the greatest surviving amphitheatres. One of Croatia's greatest natural attractions includes Plitvice Lakes National Park.

Some of the obvious attractions in Greece are to be found in Athens, Peloponnese, Zagoria, and Mystras. Others include the city of Thessaloniki, Macedonia, and Thessaly.

Kosovo's attractions include a range of Ottoman mosques, hammams, churches, and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. The Gračanica Monastery is one of the greatest Serbian monasteries.

The Tourism Cluster's vision is to foster high and raising standard of living for Macedonian citizens. Established in April 2003, the cluster is addressing the challenge of inbound tourism by offering unique tourism experiences meeting the needs of demanding customers. Since its establishment, MCA coached, guided and provided technical assistance to help the Tourism Cluster move closer to self-sustainability. The Hotel Association of Macedonia (HOTAM) has taken over the leadership in continuing the work of the Tourism Cluster. Both, HOTAM and the National Entrepreneurship & Competitiveness Council are the focal points for the Tourism Cluster. Some of the tourist spots in Macedonia include Lake Ohrid, Pelister National Park, and Bitola. Sveti Joakim Osogovsk monastery is also one of the top attractions of this country.

In Montenegro, one may visit the popular resorts in Budva and Herceg Novi, Lake Skadar and Durmitor National Park.

Romania is the largest country in Balkans having diverse cultures and landscapes. Some of the sites of medieval architecture can be found in Brasov, Sibiu, and Sighisoara. The Bucegi Mountains and Prahova Valley are popular for hiking.

Serbia offers a few monasteries tucked away in the wooden valleys like Studenica, Ljubostina.

Popular attractions in Slovenia include the Postojna and a lot of caves. Travelers may also go to visit the Lake Bled's island church. Kranjska Gora is a perfect base for hiking trails.

Turkey is famous for numerous mosques, churches and museums. A few noteworthy names include Suleymany Mosque, The Blue Mosque, and Asiyan Museum.

The ten Balkan countries are forecast to receive 79 million international tourist arrivals in the year 2020, thus recording an annual growth rate of 4,6 per cent over the period 1995–2020. The leading Balkan tourist destinations of Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia will retain the majority of Balkan tourist arrivals over 92 per cent in 2020.

The Balkan region is the leading touristic destination. Balkan countries traditionally presented special travel offers for their countries and competed between each other. Tourism is mainly concentrated in the coastal areas which receive 30 % of international tourist arrivals. The most widely used tourism development model in the region is based on seaside summer holidays and the attainment of quantitative goals. International tourist arrivals (excluding domestic arrivals) in 2009 totaled 219,6 million (a 4,7 % increase over 2000). Projections show that this figure could reach 350 million by 2020. 84 % of the tourists in the Balkan come from Europe, mostly from northern and western countries. Germany is the largest market, followed by the United Kingdom, France and Italy.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The Balkan region is one of the leading places in the world in terms of tourism development. Executed analysis indicates that special features of the region had a positive or negative impact on the tourism industry in the region. Among the positive factors are: climate, cultural and religious diversity, the presence of international tour operator, many cultural attractions, among the negative: the political instability of the region, low level of economic development and imperfect transport system. Despite this tourist industry is developing and every year the Balkan region attends an increasing number of tourists.

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## **Зовнішня політика адміністрації Барака Обами на Близькому Сході: позиція США щодо Сирії**

*Роботу виконано на кафедрі країнознавства і міжнародних відносин ВНУ ім. Лесі Українки*

Висвітлено загальні особливості сучасної політики США на Близькому Сході. Схарактеризовано основні положення виступу Барака Обами у Каїрі щодо нових відносин США із країнами регіону. Досліджено сучасну політичну ситуацію в Сирії та ставлення США до подій в цій країні. Проаналізовано позицію світового